Mindfulness for Educators: Cultivating Curiosity and Kindness Over the Long Haul

Saturday, November 7, 2015
9 am - 4 pm, Registration at 8:30 am
Watermark Country Club,
5500 Cascade Road SE, Grand Rapids, MI

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Ted DesMaisons,
MBA, MTh

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DEAN’S CORNER

The College of Education on the 50th Anniversary

Congratulations to the COE!

I have been extremely honored to serve as the College’s Dean throughout our memorable 50th anniversary year. Out of the twelve years that I have worked at Grand Valley State University, this year will stand out for me, largely because of the work of the College’s 50th Anniversary Committee, led by Dr. Linda McCrea, in hosting a series of outstanding events and activities that have reconnected me with our College’s history. My role in the College’s commemoration has focused on ensuring that the College’s rich history is preserved for future generations, so that those who follow will be able to access records such as oral histories, archival documents, video, and photographs to study and understand the life, ideas, and thoughts of individuals who have helped to shape the past.

As I prepare to leave the COE and become the President of Johnson State College in Vermont, I thought it important to say how much I have enjoyed serving as the Education Dean at GVSU. The hard-working faculty and staff have helped me achieve great things for our students and the university. These past years, I have personally benefitted from the opportunity to work with outstanding educators that have supported me in a continual process of learning and growing. My thinking about quality has expanded within and beyond the college and university as a result of my connections with a number of local agencies that are working to build educational capacity in our communities. The Literacy Center of West Michigan, Heartside Ministries, and Grand Rapids Center for Mindfulness are three wonderful examples of outstanding work that is taking place in our local communities (see pg. 2 for more information on a conference that you will not want to miss.)

Although I am leaving for Vermont, I will always be indebted to the students, faculty, staff of the College of Education. As I was reminded recently, I will truly be a “Laker for a Lifetime.”

Elaine C. Collins, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Education
Faite Mack  
Professor of Education 
By Dottie Barnes, GVSU Staff

**Colleagues:** What brought you to Grand Valley State University and why did you stay?

**Mack:** President Lubbers and Art Hills recruited me in 1972. At the time, I was the chief evaluator for Compensatory and Migrant Education at the Michigan Department of Education. Prior to that, I was a special education teacher in the Chicago Public Schools.

I was appointed an assistant professorship in the Urban Studies Institute and Public Administration with a charge of using my contacts in Lansing and the Washington area.
to pursue grant funding necessary to expand the mission of teacher education at Grand Valley. Within one year, I was appointed co-director of the Educational Studies Institute and had nearly $1 million in funding to begin graduate training for 200 teachers in the Grand Rapids Public School District.

As I look back over 40 years, it is just amazing that at the age of 29, President Lubbers had the faith in a young African-American scholar to grant him the authority to initiate the funding and proposal development of a graduate program in teacher education.

Colleagues: What have been some of the most important accomplishments you have achieved during your time at Grand Valley?

Mack: I was assigned the task of obtaining the grant funding, writing of the proposal, developing the curriculum, and receiving the approval to initiate graduate teacher education at Grand Valley. The federal awards were granted to assist the GRPS teachers with the issues of school desegregation and the other award was to establish one of 10 federal training centers to initiate preprimary impaired special education. The federal funding permitted the Graduate School of Education to operate for two years without GVSU general fund support.

I was the first African-American at Grand Valley promoted to the rank of full professor and the first faculty member to obtain a Fulbright Award. My Fulbright professorship allowed me to teach educational psychology and special education at the University of Cape Coast. My tenure in Ghana led to the initiation of Grand Valley’s formal commitment of a faculty exchange program.

Colleagues: What people, programs and partnerships have enriched students and the university?

Mack: All of the first grant proposals which led to graduate programming were made in collaboration with the Grand Rapids Public Schools, Muskegon Public Schools, Holland Public Schools, and Muskegon Heights Public Schools. This resulted in their support for a residential graduate in-service program for their teachers.

The Graduate School of Education is one of 10 Preschool Special Education Centers in the United States. We were charged with researching best methods and pioneering training for preschool special education throughout the State of Michigan.

Originally invited to Thailand as the keynote speaker for a national conference in special education at Srinakharinwirot University, I was challenged by rural educators in Nong Khai Province to start a foundation in Thailand for the many orphaned and abandoned children who could not attend school. Working with five different schools, the foundation has supported nearly 600 children over the past 15 years by providing the resources required for school attendance — uniforms, books, school fees, transport, medical support, etc.

Colleagues: What are your hopes and dreams for the future of the College of Education?

Mack: It is just amazing that for many of my students, I am the first African-American instructor they have experienced throughout their full educational history. This year’s public school enrollment presented minority children as the majority of all public school pupils.

In the College of Education, six percent of our new teacher population is minority and only 23 percent are males. Preparing minority teachers and males for classrooms must not be just for the urban schools but suburban and rural schools. Without sufficient exposure to minority teachers and professors throughout their education, students tend to characterize the teaching profession, and the academic enterprise in general, as better suited for white Americans.
The dilemma for minority students is that high-caliber students are often attracted to higher paying professions. For many minority and male students, teaching is no longer perceived as a way out of the lower class. If our nation’s schools are to reflect the model of a “just society,” minorities and males will have to be empowered with an equitable representation of teachers and school administrators, and a guarantee that teacher education is inclusive rather than exclusive. I would hope that in the near future, the figures for minority and male enrollment in the College of Education and faculty representation are representative of the enrollment in the schools.

Awards and Activities

GVSU Years = 42

ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS:

- 1972-1973
  Assistant Director, Urban Studies Institute
- 1973-1974
  Co-director, Educational Studies Institute
- 1985-1986
  Interim Director, School of Education
- 1990-1991
  Interim Graduate Director, School of Education
- 2001-2002
  Interim Graduate Director, School of Education

HONORS:

- Fulbright Scholar University of Cape Coast (Ghana)
- Michigan Association of Governing Boards Distinguished Faculty Member
- Giants’ Award in Education
- Glenn A. Niemeyer Outstanding Faculty Award for Teaching, Scholarship, and Service

FEDERAL GRANTS: $910,000

BOOKS: 3

JOURNAL ARTICLES: 42

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS: 46

FELLOWSHIPS:

- State of Illinois Governor’s Fellow
- Educational Policy Fellow, National Institute of Education
- U.S. Office of Education Doctoral Fellow in Special Education
- Community Learning Enterprise Center Fellow

STATE OF MICHIGAN CERTIFICATIONS/LICENSE:

- School Psychologist
- Elementary Education
- Secondary Education
- Special Education: Learning Disabled, Cognitive Impaired, Emotional Impaired

COMMUNITY:

- Hispanic Council of West Michigan
- Grand Rapids Planning Commission
- Grand Rapids Zoning Board
- Heritage Hill Association Board
- Robeson Players Board
Colleagues: What brought you to Grand Valley State University and why did you stay?

Konecki: I came to Grand Valley from Denver in 1986 as the director of the School of Education. Everyone was very congenial and welcoming.

I was brought here because I facilitated successful accreditations at other institutions. My primary task was to lead our efforts to become accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). With the coordination of Al Ten Eyck and work of Judy Harpold and faculty and administrators throughout Grand Valley, we were successful in our efforts and achieved national recognition for our teacher education programs. We have continued to be nationally accredited and have our pro-
grams recognized since then. It has been a pleasure to be a part of these efforts.

My husband and I fell in love with the area and Grand Rapids. We love the cultural opportunities and environment, and being able to experience four seasons is important to us.

**Colleagues:** What have been some of the most important accomplishments you have achieved during your time at Grand Valley?

**Konecki:** In addition to NCATE Accreditation, we have strengthened and expanded our teacher education and graduate programs. We added to our offerings including the Graduate Teacher Certification (GTC), College Student Affairs Leadership (CSAL), and Educational Specialist programs to meet educational needs.

Employing outstanding faculty to teach capable university students to work with pupils from all backgrounds to be successful in school and life has been an important commitment. Our efforts have included encouraging high-needs students to become teachers, new teachers to work in high-needs schools, and teachers in high-needs schools to continually enhance their skills.

I have worked on several grants and efforts during my years here, most of which have focused on helping children and families in high-needs schools have opportunities they might not otherwise have.

**Colleagues:** What people, programs and partnerships have enriched students and the university?

**Konecki:** We have established partnerships with urban districts through federal, state and foundation grants to support our commitment to enhancing the education of all students. Some of these programs involve advancing teacher skills through teacher enhancement grants, Michigan Partnership for New Education, Urban Teacher Academy, Middle Start, and W. K. Kellogg Foundation’s Woodrow Wilson Michigan Teacher Fellowship Program.

An example of just one program that involves urban schools is a student teaching opportunity in Broward County, Florida, which I worked on with Linda McCrea. Our students become familiar with people from a wide variety of backgrounds.

There are too many people to name, but I think of Don Pottorff and Barb Reinken and their work with the Godfrey-Lee reading program, and others like Cherie Williams, Sandy Miller, Jay Cooper, Lorraine Alston, John Shinsky, Caryn King and others who facilitate overseas experiences so our students have a more global perspective. Or, Liz Storey and Sheryl Vlietstra who help provide a library of books for new teachers working in high needs schools. College of Education faculty continually work to provide new opportunities for their students and society.

It has been a pleasure to work with teachers and administrators in schools and throughout the university in these efforts.

We have been very fortunate at Grand Valley and the College of Education to have a wide variety of people with diverse interests that we can call upon and use to both advance our opportunities and expand our thinking. We have people who challenge us to go beyond what we might ordinarily do to be responsive to the students in our classrooms.

**Colleagues:** What are your hopes and dreams for the future of the College of Education?

**Konecki:** I hope that the College of Education will continue its commitment to grow and change in ways that help all students and educators to be successful in a changing world.

I hope we continue our commitment to all students, all children, all youth and all adults. One of the important things about education is that it can provide you with opportunities you might not have without it. To continue our efforts to expand educational opportunities through new programs, technology, partnerships, research, and service of faculty are all crucial to the success of our students and our country.
Colleagues: What brought you to Grand Valley State University and why did you stay?

Armstrong: It was exciting for me to come to a campus that housed multiple colleges that allowed learners to engage their education from different pedagogical perspectives. When I came in 1980, I had just completed serving as a coordinator for a large federal grant in gifted and talented education in Wisconsin. The School of Education, as it was known then, had a master's track in gifted education but did not have faculty experienced in this area. I was invited to teach a course in gifted education and that began my 30+ year tenure at Grand Valley.

Grand Valley has provided a supportive environment that has allowed me to continue to grow as a professional. I
have developed innovative programs for both Grand Valley students and area k-12 students and their teachers.

Colleagues: What have been some of the most important accomplishments you have achieved during your time at Grand Valley?

Armstrong: I have taught both undergraduate and graduate courses as well as supervising practica in the areas of early childhood education, elementary education, gifted and talented, and elementary and secondary reading. Most recently I have been involved in the development of the Graduate Teacher Certification Program, which we designed to serve returning adults who wished to earn initial teacher certification. We redesigned the master’s in gifted and talented to have a broader focus that we named Educational Differentiation. We are now developing pedagogically strong online instruction in both of these programs.

From 1981 until 1997, I ran a program on the Allendale campus named Focus on Ability that served about 300 k-8 students from the tri-county area each summer. The young students told us what they would like to learn; teachers, who were earning a degree in gifted education, came in three weeks before the students to develop the curriculum around those interests. Finally, the k-8 students engaged the curriculum using the resources of the university. Students and teachers returned each summer to this learning community, and I continue to hear from many of them.

For three years beginning in 1984, I wrote the grant and administered the Summer Institute for the Arts and Sciences program. Only five of the state universities were awarded grants to offer this program, which was designed to serve high-ability students from all high schools in the state.

Colleagues: What people, programs and partnerships have enriched students and the university?

Armstrong: One very important partnership was with Muskegon Heights and Grand Rapids Public Schools. We were able to provide tuition and transportation to students who might otherwise not have had the resources to attend Focus on Ability. The districts provided transportation and scholarships for their students for one year. Most of the students wanted to return so our program covered the scholarships for returning students; the districts offered the program to additional students.

For years I served as a member of Kent Intermediate School District Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee. As the liaison from Grand Valley, I developed links through which GVSU provided professional development, hosted conventions, and co-sponsored programs for teachers and or students.

I had the opportunity to develop international partnerships when I served half time as Director of International Studies. Although not in the School of Education, the partnerships that I started with Kingston Polytechnic in England, National ChengChi in Taiwan, as well as running the student and faculty exchange programs with the Krakow University of Economics, International Christian University, and the University of Sarajevo, provided opportunities for study abroad for our students and faculty.

Colleagues: What are your hopes and dreams for the future of the College of Education?

Armstrong: There has never been a time when so many have been so focused on education. We must be open to creative ways to re-conceptualize learning and teaching. What we have accomplished in the first 50 years in the College of Education is a prologue to the future. It is a time of opportunity for our people, programs and partnerships.
Colleagues: What brought you to Grand Valley State University and why did you stay?

Herrera: I came to Grand Valley in 1972. I grew up in Colombia and was a teacher there. I came to Grand Valley for new opportunities. It was a very exciting time at the university — programs were in their infancy and Grand Valley offered an open field of possibilities for those with creativity, goals and clear objectives. This was the place to be. President Lubbers was a great support in matters of accepting new ideas that are still part of the structure of Grand
Valley. I grew up professionally with this institution. Now that I’m retired, I can see the whole picture of Grand Valley and it is beautiful.

**Colleagues:** What have been some of the most important accomplishments you have achieved during your time at Grand Valley?

**Herrera:** I was honored to play a part in helping create the College of Graduate Studies and the curriculum for graduate programs. Many people at Grand Valley were opposed to graduate programs at the time. There was no place for the college so we would travel to different cities in the area to teach. We eventually had an office in downtown Grand Rapids and then in the State Building, before having an office on campus. These programs flourished because of community and faculty support.

I also helped establish bilingual education programs and I helped with the joining of the liberal arts curriculum with the professional education curriculum.

In the 1980s, the budget was tight; many programs were being cut. It was a painful time. There were plans to cut our reading program. I came out front and said this couldn’t happen. The reading program was the most fundamental program; reading is the most fundamental skill of learning for a human being. They listened to my plea, so I volunteered to meet with two professors from Michigan State University’s reading program. They provided me with the fundamentals of their program and we were able to save the reading program at Grand Valley.

**Colleagues:** What people, programs and partnerships have enriched students and the university?

**Herrera:** I was very much involved with expanding our international and global education. We established partnerships and programs in several countries, including Ghana, Korea and Yugoslavia. We had both students programs and faculty teaching programs in these countries.

Also, receiving accreditation through the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education was a hard process, but extremely important. I tip my hat to the faculty and deans who helped in this process, like Loretta Konecki and Dean Elaine Collins. This accomplishment put a seal on the quality of the College of Education.

**Colleagues:** What are your hopes and dreams for the future of the College of Education?

**Herrera:** I hope that the College of Education will continue its commitment to grow and change in ways that help all students and educators to be successful in a changing world.

We have challenges as we enter a new era, and that is linking human values to technology. Today’s learners are techies and the human element has suffered. We need to create a synergy and balance between learning and technology and be sure to establish relationship with our students.

I hope we continue our commitment to all students, all children, all youth and all young adults. One of the important things about education is that it can provide opportunities students might not have outside of the university. We need to continue providing those opportunities, whether it is through technology, or partnerships, or research and service from the faculty. It is crucial to the success of our students, individuals and our country.
Colleagues: What brought you to Grand Valley State University and why did you stay?

Smithalexander: I came to Grand Valley from Kalamazoo Valley Community College where I was the coordinator of the program for Disability Services. I had just earned a degree in psychology and was taking classes in counseling and personnel when I heard about the opportunity and the posting for a director and a counselor in a program known as Upward Bound. I grew up in Grand Rapids and attended Central High School and Grand Rapids Junior College, so I was eager to get back home.

In 1978, Grand Valley hired me as a counselor for the TRiO Upward Bound program to help first-generation and low-income students prepare for getting into and graduating from college. Coming to Grand Valley was
coming home to a dream job. In 1986, I became director of both Upward Bound and Talent Search.

**Colleagues:** What have been some of the most important accomplishments you have achieved during your time at Grand Valley?

**Smithalexander:** When there were very few African-American students on campus, I became their advisor and taught the students the power of working together as a group. We organized and sponsored the first MLK program at Grand Valley and in the city of Grand Rapids.

Also, meeting with first-generation eighth-grade students whose parents have no high school education and few resources, finances, or information about the process of preparing and paying for their children’s college education. Because of what I do, hundreds of my students are able to realize their dream of a college degree and go on to become doctors, lawyers, professors, policemen, counselors and teachers.

I have also written and secured grants up to $1.5 million a year, for more than 20 years to support programs for first-generation, low-income students.

**Colleagues:** What people, programs and partnerships have enriched students and the university?

**Smithalexander:** I wrote and designed the first Mathematics and Science Program on campus to focus on improving the math and science skills of high school students; a $1.2 million grant, and I wrote the first McNair Scholars Program on campus to prepare first-generation and low-income students to enter into a doctoral program; a $1.1 million grant. I maintain the Upward Bound program by raising the profiles for the TRiO programs.

I have been able to develop some key partnerships that have benefitted the students and the university. They include Grand Rapids Public Schools, Baldwin Public Schools, East Kentwood Public Schools and Godwin Public Schools. I had the honor of being elected to the Grand Rapids Board of Education for two terms, where work was done in the areas of curriculum and early college program for high school students.

I have also served on state, regional and national boards of my professional organizations, including serving as president of the State Board of Michigan.

**Colleagues:** What are your hopes and dreams for the future of the College of Education?

**Smithalexander:** In the College of Education, we realize the need for more students from the urban schools to consider teaching and acknowledge that more effort must be made to not only identify those students, but also provide the support they require to get into and out of the College of Education.

We understand this extra support is required because many of our students from urban schools are coming in at a disadvantage because they received an inferior education (for whatever reason). They are competing with students who come from more affluent communities and schools that offer a better education. Both are expected to finish at the same time and be equally prepared to teach. For those students who are coming from some urban schools, the College of Education must provide services to support them so they can catch up in certain areas.

The urban schools student populations are progressively becoming black, brown and poor, while the teaching populations are more white and upper-middle-class. In the future, as Grand Valley, I hope all colleges of education develop strategies to address this crisis from both perspectives. It means encouraging more students from urban and rural communities to consider teaching by providing the necessary support to help them become successful. We must also develop professional standards and a threshold that all seasoned and new teachers must meet to continually teach.

_Awards and Certificates Continued on page 16_
Claudia Sowa Wojciakowski
Professor Emerita

Colleagues: What brought you to Grand Valley State University and why did you stay?

Wojciakowski: Before coming to Grand Valley, I was an associate professor and program director for the Counseling Education Program at the University of Virginia. I came to Grand Valley in 2000 because of the opportunity to develop the master’s program for school counselors. I stayed because I was fortunate enough to be able to interact with people who let me create and develop programs; they were very encouraging and supportive. I was given the opportunity to go from creating the master’s in school counseling to creating the College of Education’s Community Outreach Office, which is now the Center for Educational Partnerships. I wanted to stay because Grand Valley allowed me to take best practices and current research and use it to create offices and programs.

Colleagues: What have been some of the most important accomplishments you have achieved during your time at Grand Valley?

Wojciakowski: It really makes me happy to see how well students are doing in the master’s in school counseling program. I am also proud of the Center for Educational Partnerships and the outstanding team of people who work in that office. For a small office, they accomplish a tremendous amount. One of the things I am most pleased about is the teamwork associated with that office. They are the link between the College of Education and the community. The team works to create partnerships that range

Awards and Certificates

- Southeastern Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel (SAEOpp) Distinguished Consultant Award
- Michigan Chapter of MAEOPP for Distinctive Leadership, Vision, Commitment, and Loyalty and President Award
- National Council of Educational Opportunity Associations-Advocate Award
- Grand Rapids Community College Award for establishing the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Memorial Walk
- The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, West Michigan Chapter Award Grand Rapids Public School Board Women’s History Month honoring the Legacy of African American Women Elected Officials Award
- Grand Valley State University Outstanding Black Student Union (BSU) Advisor Award-three years in a row
- BSU-Most Successful Fundraising-Certificate of Achievement
- Student Foundation-Most Innovative Program
- Administrative/Professional Service to Community Award

— Continued from page 15
from grants that connect the college to schools, to organizing Convocation to producing the Colleagues publication.

Colleagues: What people, programs and partnerships have enriched students and the university?

Wojciakowski: My colleagues who helped create the School Counseling Program, Sue Clay and Shawn Bultsma, are outstanding. That program has the No. 1 passing rate for the state and it offers an opportunity for a career for students in education outside of the classroom, but still very much involved in the academic success of students.

I truly think that the faculty in the College of Education, as a whole, care about the education that students receive and the role that education plays in helping them be strong professionals who are interested in the professional field beyond the classroom.

Colleagues: What are your hopes and dreams for the future of the College of Education?

Wojciakowski: I would love to see the College of Education be more recognized publically for the value that it has in creating a future for everybody. Our students and faculty are doing such great work.

I’d also love to see the College of Education take a strong stand with legislation and be champions for good education in Michigan for all preschool and school-age children.
EDUCATION THROUGH THE LAST 50 YRS
1960 Johnson creates Head Start program for low-income preschoolers.

1962 Engel v. Vitale rules that states cannot mandate prayer in school.

1964 President Lyndon Johnson signs the TRiO Act.

1965 Affirmative Action becomes law.


1968 Engel v. Vitale rules that states cannot mandate prayer in school.

1968 International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) is established.

1969 Sesame Street airs for the first time.

1963 Grand Valley State College begins to offer freshman and sophomore classes.

1965 Grand Valley State University President James Zumberge (1963-69) agrees to add seven undergraduate education courses for “Preparation for The Teaching Profession.”

1967 The Teacher Preparation Program begins; Arthur Hills serves as the initial program coordinator.

1968 Grand Valley approved by the state to recommend teachers for certification. 97 prospective elementary teachers and 77 secondary teachers enrolled.

1969 The Teacher Education Center is formed under James Hoffman and Grand Valley hosts the Michigan Association Student Teacher Spring Regional Conference.
Education Through the Years

1971
- Email is sent for the first time, promising the development of distance education.
- The Educational Studies Institute is established under Dale Olsen and Weston Wochholz; hosts “self-improvement” summer workshops to current area teachers and professors.

1972
- Title IX passes, banning sex discrimination in educational institutions.
- Robert Cross directs summer programs for cognitively impaired students; hosting 116 between the ages of seven and twenty.

1973
- Rehabilitation Act bans discrimination against those with disabilities.
- Faite Mack applies for three grants: Right to Read, Bilingual Education, and a Multi-Ethnic Teacher Education Inservice program grant. The grants fund the first graduate education programs offered by Grand Valley.

1975
- Age Discrimination Act passes, banning discrimination in hiring and firing older persons.
- The School of Education partners with Seidman School of Business to offer Grand Valley’s first graduate-level education courses—Mary Segar is appointed interim director of the education programs. They are funded solely by grants for the first two years and housed downtown at 156 E. Fulton St.
- The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), marks the beginning of modern day special education in classrooms and requires free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for all students with disabilities.
- The School of Education partners with Seidman School of Business to offer Grand Valley’s first graduate-level education courses—Mary Segar is appointed interim director of the education programs. They are funded solely by grants for the first two years and housed downtown at 156 E. Fulton St.

1978
- University of California Regents v. Allan Bakke increases tension over the implementation of affirmative action.
- United States Department of Education is made a Cabinet level agency.

1979
- Faite Mack applies for three grants: Right to Read, Bilingual Education, and a Multi-Ethnic Teacher Education Inservice program grant. The grants fund the first graduate education programs offered by Grand Valley.

1978
- University of California Regents v. Allan Bakke increases tension over the implementation of affirmative action.
- United States Department of Education is made a Cabinet level agency.
NATION

- 1983 Howard Gardner proposes theory of multiple intelligences, addressing the need for different types of teaching.
- 1983 First American woman in space Sally Ride, later wrote children's books on science and space exploration.
- 1987 JJ Carnell finds that 90% of schools claim their students score above average on standardized tests.

1980s

- 1986 Loretta Konecki becomes director of the School of Education. Her main task is to earn national accreditation for the School of Education.
- 1987 The School of Education earns NCATE (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education) accreditation, putting our education programs on-par with premier universities across the United States.

GVSU

- 1980 First catalog reference to the “School of Education” for undergraduate student, housed within the College of Arts and Sciences.
- 1988 Gay teacher and straight student create the first Gay-Straight Alliance at Concord Academy.
- 1989 Dead Poets Society is released, critiquing common public education practices of the time.
Education Through the Years

1990s

NATION

• 1992 First Charter school is established in Michigan called City Academic High School
• 1995 Daniel Goleman publishes theory on emotional intelligence.
• 1995 Regents from the University of California eliminate race and gender from admissions process.
• 1995 Smartboards are implemented in classrooms.
• 1996 The first of the seven Harry Potter novels are published, encouraging students across the globe to read, despite dissention about its content.
• 1998 Google is invented.

1999

• 1999 Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold massacre fellow students, killing 12 students and 1 teacher and injuring 21 others, at Columbine High School in Columbine, Colorado.
• 1999 The National Household Education Surveys Program reports that 850,000 students in the United States are home-schooled.

President Clinton expresses his sorrow over the Columbine High School Shooting

Robert Hagerty, Dean of the GVSU School of Education

GVSU

• 1993 Allan Ten Eyck is appointed first Dean of the School of Education as it becomes an autonomous unit within GVSU. Ten Eyck said this transition “gave us equity with other divisions on campus and made us responsible for all our programs.”
• 1996 Robert Hagerty becomes the second Dean of the School of Education. Hagerty focuses on increasing community partnerships with school districts by providing professional development and support for Michigan teachers.
• 1998 The School of Education begins offering GVSU’s first doctoral-level courses in Educational Leadership through a partnership with Eastern Michigan University’s Ed.D. program.
2003 Elaine Collins is appointed Dean of the School of Education. Her primary goals are to build a strong community and technology infrastructure, increase diversity, and support and recognize quality work within the SOE.

2004 The College of Education is established, offering graduate and undergraduate programs in education.

2006 The COE is initially recognized as an “Exemplary Teacher Preparation Institution” by the Michigan Department of Education, a title that the COE has retained annually.

2001 President George W. Bush signs No Child Left Behind Act.


2009 Nancy Zimpher becomes the first female Chancellor of the State University of New York and is in charge of over 64 community college and university campuses.

Thank you to Alex Jacobsson of the College of Education and Nancy Richard of the GVSU Library for their assistance with the timeline.
2010s

NATION
• 2012 Adam Lanza shoots and kills 20 elementary students and 6 staff members at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

What Will Education Look Like in the Future?
• Increased use of technology in classrooms such as mobile, online and open-source learning.
• Teachers guide students rather than instruct them.
• MOOCs—massive open online classrooms—will allow students from all over the world to take the same course.
• mLearning—online courses available on mobile phones.
• Gamification of eLearning courses—instruction will resemble video games rather than common instruction like a lecture.
• Increased distance learning, teachers jobs becoming more and more obsolete.

GVSU
• 2010 The TRiO Educational Talent Search and TRiO Upward Bound programs join the GOE. Both programs serve to assist students from traditionally underserved backgrounds reach their potential by earning a college degree.
• 2012 The COE passes the 2012 NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) accreditation review by meeting the requirement for all six standards.
• 2013 The COE moves into a new, central location in Richard M. DeVos Center, with departments on the 4th and 3rd floors. TRiO Educational Talent Search also has a new accessible location in The Depot, located at 510 W. Fulton.
• After 50 years, over 13 buildings, and 4 cities, the COE finally has a home in DeVos Center and continues to build a strong education-centered community.

Police Investigate the Scene at Sandy Hook Elementary School

eLearning on handheld devices

“Teaching, Leading and Learning in a Democratic Society”

NATION

GVSU
Technology in the COE: Past, Present and Future

By Andrew Topper and Sean Lancaster, GVSU Faculty

Past

Technology in the College of Education (COE) has transformed dramatically over the last 50 years. Originally, a single technology course was offered at the undergraduate level—Computer Science 150—taught outside of the COE. CS 150 was focused on technology tools, like office applications, which was not unlike many teacher preparation computer courses back in the 1990s. CS 150 later became ED 205, which was taught by faculty in the COE. ED 205 switched the focus from teaching tools to teaching how to integrate technology into teaching to enhance student learning. In an effort to make ED 205 more meaningful by linking it with actual field-based experiences, EDT 370 was developed to replace ED 205.

After moving from Allendale to downtown Grand Rapids, faculty members in the COE used available computer labs—Mac color computers and Windows PC’s—in the Eberhard Center in the undergraduate teacher education program and graduate Educational Technology/School Library Media programs. The DeVos building on Fulton was opened in 2000 with interactive television (ITV) classrooms and lecture-style labs with layouts that made assumptions about teaching and learning—tables in rows of computers and a kiosk for the instructor with projectors and one printer. At the time, laptop computers were available but the labs were equipped with desktop PC’s and specific software for colleges and departments. Eventually, the COE even had a mobile laptop computer cart for use in any Eberhard classroom.

Present

In 2013 the COE moved into the Richard M. DeVos Center providing access to more technology. Campus buildings downtown have wireless Internet and printing, with about 50% of faculty at Grand Valley State University now using BlackBoard for online course content and instruction. We have also seen some integration of smartphones, tablets, and laptop computers, as well as limited use of mobile apps. The COE continues to innovate, currently offering more graduate courses and programs in hybrid and online formats than any other college at GVSU. The COE even offered the first fully online master’s program at the university with the educational technology program now offered in a hybrid format for students locally and also in a fully online format for students at a distance. The COE has also been building online certificate programs for graduate students who want to become proficient in a specific knowledge base without going through a complete master’s program.

Efforts are already underway within the COE and university to support faculty as they migrate their courses and programs online. The Pew Faculty Teaching and Learning Center, in collaboration with GVSU IT/IDeL, instituted...
teaching circles for faculty interested in teaching online in the fall of 2014. COE faculty members currently represent the largest group of faculty attending these circles, which reflects the growing interest in online instruction.

The whole university is learning to adapt to students who are now often bringing their own technologies to campus. This means that many computer labs are no longer as in high demand. And as more students have access to ubiquitous technologies, instructors are able to place more course materials and course functions online even when teaching a fully face-to-face class. The COE is also focused on addressing the changing nature of higher education from globalization to accreditation to even supporting student teachers using technologies.

“In higher education, the U.S. has been outpaced internationally. In 1990, the U.S. ranked first in the world in four-year degree attainment among 25-34 year olds; today, the U.S. ranks 12th.” Education, the White House, §2.

Future–2025

Children currently in 2nd grade will enter college in 2024-25. The Z generation, or post-millennials, will live in an information-intensive society where technology is taken for granted as part of life, likely being the first internet-enabled student generation (Digital life in 2025).

Looking into the future should always be done with the realization that things will likely change more quickly than expected and often in unexpected ways. Doing so with an eye on how technology might continue to influence the COE and GVSU may still provide some insights.

Key questions

How will technology change in the next 10 years?

We will likely see continued growth in wireless access, mobile and wearable technology, open source and open education. In higher education, we may also see a reduction in traditional (4- or 5-year degree programs with terms/semesters) and a movement towards more self-paced, guided learning, with alternatives to traditional university outcomes—B.A/S, M.Ed., etc., i.e., towards certifications and other credentials (Trends in Higher Education: NMC
Horizon Report). Flexibility will be critical for success in education in the next 10 years.

Technology trends in higher education include an increase in online offerings, competition from Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and other online efforts, an explosion in educational apps for mobile + tablet computers, “gamification,” open educational resources, etc. As models of instruction change from traditional classrooms, concerns about the quality of higher education and the role of technology in it become more critical.

“Technology can make education better. It will do so, in part, by forcing us to reflect on what education is, identify what only a person can do, and devote educators’ time to that.” Hieronymi, 2012, ¶ 11.

**How will college students change?**

Universities will continue to see a more diverse student population—older, more ethnic diversity, 1st generation, etc.—along with increased competition for students (The College of 2020: Students). GVSU administrators have identified specific action items for the university in the future (2016-2021 GVSU Strategic Plan): Exercise our existing DNA and culture, increasing creativity, innovation and risk taking, to continue to stretch our high standards of excellence.

**What impact will technology have on instruction and assessment at GVSU? How will changing technologies influence or change instruction and assessment in education?**

The answer to these questions depends on the vision GVSU and the COE have for the role of technology in higher education, and expectations on the part of decision makers and stakeholders regarding benefits of adopting and using technology. Certainly, technology can be used to support teaching, assessment, and the procedural and administrative aspects of higher education. But are there other ways in which technology can be used that improve our offerings, by providing more flexibility, or expanding our offerings to reach students who would not otherwise come to GVSU?

**Opportunities for technology to impact GVSU in 2025**

The COE will continue to expand its reach beyond west Michigan, through partnerships, as well as through technology. More high quality online offerings will be necessary to reach a more distant and busy population of professionals. The COE will continue to increase in diversity of students and also increase educational offerings. As State funding continues to reach the lowest levels in history, GVSU will need to look for other ways to increase revenues while holding overall costs steady and continuing to offer a high quality education.

Technology adoption in education affords opportunities to examine how and what we teach, looking for ways to expand or extend our reach and redefine learning, instruction and assessment with the digital tools available. This process of critical reflection can provide improvements in teaching, learning, and student success in college and in life, and support the continued success of GVSU and the College of Education for the next 50 years.

**References**

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School Shootings:
On the early morning of December 14, 2012, students aged six to ten filed into their classrooms at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT, ready to begin just another school day. Shortly after, parents of children arrived at the school to help students build gingerbread houses in preparation for the Holidays. But at 9:34 a.m., instead of the merry delight of the winter season, the halls were filled with the ringing sound of gunshots and the lingering smell of gunpowder.

The culprit was Adam Lanza, a 20 year-old alumnus of Sandy Hook who had been recently diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Early on December 14th, Lanza shot through a plate glass window at the school’s entrance and brutally murdered twenty five- and six-year-old students along with six faculty members, before turning the gun on himself. Most terrifying of all was the fact that Lanza not only shot the children in cold blood, but shot them all several times. Lanza’s bloody rampage through the halls of Sandy Hook marked the deadliest shooting by one person and the second deadliest mass murder in American History (Riversong, 2014).

After Sandy Hook, the country was stunned, and the residents of Newtown, CT were devastated. The massacre reminded schools across the country that any school could be vulnerable at any time to this type of tragedy. The eyes of the public were open wide and pointed sharply at school security systems. How could a tragedy such as this be prevented in the future? Did we not learn our lesson from Columbine? Schools did what they could to push through the last few days before winter break, and when class resumed, security at schools started to look drastically different.

Around the country, school districts implemented numerous security systems to ensure the safety of students and staff. Maintenance in Cold Spring, Minn. installed 170 bulletproof whiteboards in classrooms and trained teachers to use their bodies to protect students. Schools in Asheville, NC spent $1.3 million on a new surveillance system. In rural West Plains, Montana, select teachers and staff are now able to carry concealed weapons during the school day (Marklein, 2013).

Security measures were taken close to home as well, right here in West Michigan. Schools in East Grand Rapids...
now require any visitors to enter through the main offices before gaining access to other parts of the buildings. The office is now the first line of defense against intruders such as Lanza. Additionally, both Grandville and Forest Hills school districts received voter support to pass a bond that revamped school entrances with surveillance cameras and a security system (Maroney, 2013). Other schools throughout the state of Michigan have hired armed law enforcement to be on patrol in school hallways, as well as systems that require visitors to be approved and buzzed into the building upon arrival.

Aside from increased security, the tragedy of Sandy Hook (as well as Columbine) has increased the demand for effective school counselors. Amanda Klinger, director of operations for the Educators School Safety Network, says that since the shooting, schools have focused mainly on security systems but they still have “a lot of work to do.” She notes, “[Schools] need to work with teachers to develop lockdown procedures that are more developmentally-appropriate for young students.” She also says that schools need more comprehensive plans in place for assessing threats and for responding to a wide range of crises, not just school shootings (Stokes, 2014). Klinger has a point. The aftermath of shootings such as these dramatically affect the loved ones, family members, and coworkers of those who were killed. Having an open as well as preventative environment can help those affected have an easier time coping with such a heartbreak.

The tragic Sandy Hook massacre has noticeably shifted public opinion about security in schools. Though schools remain the safest place for American children, the hot topic of “school shootings” has dramatically increased the demands on school districts to provide safe and secure environments for students and staff. Throughout the country, money continues to be allocated towards heightened security, even three years after the massacre. In 1999, only one out of every five schools had a security camera. Today three out of five do (Stokes, 2014). However, Ronald Stephens, executive director of the National School Safety Center in Westlake Village, Calif., reminds us that though the public pressure on schools to increase security has been “tremendous,” the probability of violence occurring at schools continues to be, statistically, very small (Marklein, 2013).

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vigil image from: http://www.kplu.org/post/police-connecticut-school-shooter-armed-hundreds-roundsammunition
Fifty years (1964–2014) in the life of an educational institution is a relatively short period especially for a post-secondary institution. That same time frame represents over one-fifth of the life of this nation and a little less than 30% of the time that Michigan has been a state in the union. And just as that same time period could not have passed without America’s social structure evolving, so too have there been important developments in America’s schools resulting from changes in educational legislation, policy, curriculum and instruction. In fact, the period from 1964–2014 was witness to significant changes in education. This mirrored the profound changes in American society. In honor of the 50th anniversary of Grand Valley State University’s College of Education, this article will review some of the key educational legislation and policies at the federal level during that same time period. The reader will see how the federal government has successfully managed its presence in a state policy area and become an “800 lb.” gorilla in K-12 education. Readers will also appreciate that a significant part of what is occurring in Michigan schools today has its roots in many of those same federal initiatives.

Key Federal Legislative Moments
One of the most important pieces of social legislation in American history transpired during the summer prior to the first year that teacher training became available at Grand Valley. In the aftermath of President Kennedy’s assassination the Civil Rights Act (CRA, 1964) was signed into law in July, 1964 by President Lyndon Johnson. The impact of this legislation would be felt for decades to come.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act
The CRA was followed in 1965 by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The ESEA was part of Johnson’s “War on Poverty,” which, in turn, was part of his “Great Society” vision. It was intended to narrow the skills gap in reading, writing, and math between low income, inner city and rural students, and their middle class suburban counterparts. That gap is an issue that persists. The negative influences of poverty on children in our society remain an obstacle to greater social equity and cohesion and thus, further development of the democratic experiment that is America.

The ESEA was also the beginning of one of the most far-reaching incursions by the federal government into a policy domain over which it has no constitutional authority—K-12 public education is the responsibility of the states under the Tenth Amendment. Yet, over the decades, through fiscal incentives combined with targeted or categorical funding in return for voluntary state and district compliance, the federal government has successfully leveraged legislation such as Title I of ESEA into a powerful tool for achieving regulatory compliance in numerous K-12 policy areas. That leverage has continued into the 21st century through No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and its more recent companion, Race to The Top (RTT). Under successive presidents of both political stripes in a post-\textit{Brown v. Board of Education} society, the desire to have all of the nation’s children gain access to quality K-12 opportunities has seen increasingly assertive policy measures on the part of the federal government accompanied
by substantial fiscal incentives that the states have found difficult to refuse.

**Project Head Start**

Continuing with a focus upon poverty, a recurring theme that grew out of President Johnson’s 1964 State of the Union address, 1965 also witnessed the federal government’s initiation of Project Head Start, a preschool education program that began as an 8-week summer program directed at low-income families—“a comprehensive child development program that would help communities meet the needs of disadvantaged preschool children” (US Dept. of HHS, n.d.). The importance of this program over the last 50 years has been demonstrated by its expansion, fiscal expenditure and placement within federal government bureaucracies.

“[I]n 1977, under the Carter administration, Head Start began bilingual and bicultural programs in about 21 states. Seven years later, … under the Reagan administration, Head Start’s grant budget exceeded $1 billion … [Later] under the Clinton administration, … Head Start was reauthorized to expand to full-day and full-year services, [and] in 2009, under the Obama administration, … more than 64,000 slots for Early Head Start and Head Start programs [were added]” (US Dept. of HHS, n.d.). With that growth and expansion have come increased expectations and academic standards. Society has come to appreciate the value of preschool education for all, not merely the children of low-income parents. To this end, Michigan’s last two governors also embraced the need for preschool education.
Bilingual Education Act
Early in 1968, President Johnson also signed into law the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) as Title VII of the ESEA. California and Texas already had state and district statutes that addressed the issue of instruction in a student’s native tongue, but the federal government intended to broaden the scope of that exposure. The BEA ceased in 2002, and bilingual education changed its focus to English acquisition under NCLB, but that was not the primary focus of the original legislation. The change reflected the political shift in control of the U.S. House from the mid-1990s through the new millennium, and along with it, an increased concern over the impact of immigration and the influx of non-English speakers, their increased demands upon social institutions such as schools, and the claims by some of conflicting research about the effectiveness of traditional bilingual education. That change in attitude originated, in part, under President Reagan in the 1980s, resulting in the federal government shrinking financial support for traditional bilingual education in favor of immersion or English-only programs (NYSED, 2009, p. 63). The implications of the subsequent passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act in 1990, addressed below, hastened this change.

Title IX
Familiar to most readers will be Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 signed by President Nixon. But that familiarity is often associated with sports, and here in Michigan, perhaps most recently, with the court decision in 2006 that declared that the women’s high school sports schedule set forth by the Michigan High School Athletic Association was in violation of Title IX because many of its seasons were set in what was deemed the “off season.” But, the original legislation possessed a much broader scope. It declared that no one “on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance”. Thus, the legislation has had a far greater impact on academics for females whose post-K-12 educational aspirations prior to 1972 were often stifled not only by societal expectations, but also college admittance restrictions. However, by 1994, 63 percent of female high school graduates aged 16-24 were enrolled in college, up 20 percentage points from 43 percent in 1973. And from 1971-72 to 2009-10, the percentage of Bachelor degrees awarded to women increased from 44 to 57.4 percent (NCWGE, 2002; USDoE, 2012). At GVSU, 58 percent of Bachelor degrees in 2013-14 went to women, data that is in keeping with the national trend. Furthermore, women were awarded 66.6 percent of GVSU graduate degrees (GVSU Institutional Analysis, 2014). The influence of the federal Title IX legislation upon American women cannot be understated. Its impact has been far more than mere athletics and has afforded many the opportunity to explore economic avenues previously unavailable.

The Rehabilitation Act
In 1973, following the initial signing of Title IX, the Rehabilitation Act ascended to law. It guaranteed the civil rights of those with disabilities in the context of federally funded institutions. Consequently, for districts and K-12 schools receiving federal funds, there were requirements for accommodations for the disabled in their programs and activities as well as structural accommodations for physical access. Most readers who are special educators are familiar with section 504 of this Act which has become the vehicle through which accommodations can be made for K-12 students who do not necessarily qualify for special education services or an Individualized Education Plan.

Equal Educational Opportunities Act
A year later in 1974, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) passed, Grounded in the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, the EEOA also derived from a 1970 memo from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). That memo published a requirement on the part of school districts stipulating that they had to take action to overcome any language barriers for English-Language Learner (ELL) students that were perceived as an impediment to their equal participation in instructional programs. “Where inability to speak and understand the English language excludes national origin-minority group children from effective participation in the educational program offered by a school district, the district must take affirmative steps to rectify the language
deficiency in order to open its instructional program to these students” (35 Fed. Reg. 11595, 1970).

**Education of All Handicapped Children Act & FAPE**

The prior legislation all built toward the passage in 1975 of the well-known Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EHA, PL94-142) with its assurance of “a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities ages 5-21.” An expansion of Title VI that was set out in the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act, EHA mandated that, in addition to complying with FAPE requirements, states receiving federal funds also had to comply with the following criteria familiar to K-12 special educators: (a) nondiscriminatory identification and evaluation that included essential safeguards for the student’s cultural and linguistic diversity; (b) an individualized education program (IEP); (c) a least restrictive environment (LRE); (d) the right to parental participation throughout; and (e) due process to ensure parental rights of appeal (Cengage Learning, n.d.). A decade later, an amendment extended the purpose of EHA to include children ages 0-5 and at the same time, to develop early intervention programs for infants aged 0-2. Four years after that in 1990, the Act was reauthorized and renamed to the more familiar IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, PL 101-476). The original terminology was updated, eligibility was expanded, assistive technology was incorporated into IEPs, and the notion of LRE was also extended to include the requirement that “the child, to the maximum extent appropriate, be educated with children without disabilities” (ATTO, 2005). The initial passage and subsequent reauthorization and upgrading of federal educational requirements for special needs students has had a profound effect for that population. Whether this would have occurred on such a scale had it been left to the initiatives of the respective states remains a point of debate. Certainly, the quality and patchwork reality of legislative differences in other state policy areas might suggest otherwise.

**Creation of the U.S. Department of Education**

The federal Department of Education was made a cabinet level agency in 1980 under the Carter administration. Since 1953, it had been the Office of Education as part of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). That separation and elevation was an act that formalized the importance of education to the ongoing social and economic development of American society as well as an acknowledgment of the continuing role that the federal government needed to play in assisting with that progress, much to the chagrin of those who support smaller government. In 1965, the Office of Education had a budget of $1.5B and 2100 employees. By 2000, that budget had grown to $33B. Under President Bush, NCLB legislation triggered a huge expansion in the department’s K-12 spending: from $20 billion in 2000 to $37 billion by 2005” (Edwards, n.d.). For FY2014, the department’s total budget rose to $71B (USDoE, 2013).

**Goals 2000—Educate America Act**

The election of Democratic President Bill Clinton marked the beginning of a more concerted effort by the federal government to influence state standards and testing. That effect commenced in 1994 with his Goals 2000—Educate America Act (PL 103-227). The core of that program involved grants to the states to assist in the development of standards-based curricula. Some readers may recall Michigan’s Curriculum Framework document (MDE, 1996) nearly 20 years ago—the precursor to the Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs). The increased focus on testing over the years has been a bi-partisan effort. Then Texas governor, George W. Bush, used funding from Clinton’s Goals 2000 to develop his own state’s standards and testing regime which, in turn, lead to one of the major pillars of his 2000 campaign for the presidency, and eventually informed his thinking about his 2002 legislation, No Child Left Behind. In that sense, he followed in President Clinton’s footsteps, who as governor of Arkansas in the 1980s, embraced the standards and testing movement. Both of these governors-cum-president brought their state educational initiatives to Washington, and through the federal department of education, saw portions of them realized nationally.

**Improving America’s Schools Act**

Goals 2000 was just the first educational step for President Clinton’s administration. Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA, PL 103-382) was advanced shortly afterwards. IASA was a reauthorization of ESEA. Prior to it, economically
disadvantaged students covered under Title I were permitted to satisfy standards different. Invariably, those standards were less challenging. IASA required Title I students to satisfy the same standards as everyone else. “By requiring that standards and accountability be the same for all children, it made Title I funding, the largest single federal funding stream for elementary and secondary education, contingent on state and local decisions around standards, testing, teacher training, curriculum, and accountability” (NYSED, 2009, p. 67). Further to this, the passage by Congress of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 1998 (PL 105-244) included a provision under its Title II that institutions and states receiving “teacher quality enhancement grants” produce annual reports on their efforts to improve teacher preparation (USDoE, 2006). For decades, K-12 students, schools and programs had been the focus of federal government initiatives. The US Department of Education was now turning its gaze to teachers and teacher quality in K-12.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
The election of President George W. Bush in 2000 saw major changes in American education. NCLB was the congressional reauthorization of Clinton’s 1994 IASA. What began as a 25-page concept paper inviting Congress to “help write the bill,” eventually resulted in a 1100-page piece of legislation (NYSED, 2009, p. 73). Readers will be familiar with the most frequently cited requirements and terminology: (a) students were to have reached some declared “proficiency” level by 2014; (b) adequate yearly progress (AYP) was to increase so that 100 percent proficiency was achieved by 2014; and (c) AYP was not only to apply cumulatively (the average of all students), but the data was also to be disaggregated to reflect each student subgroup comprising the totality of the student population (hence the legislation’s title “no child left behind”). Furthermore, any one subgroup failing to achieve AYP meant that the entire school was deemed “failing” and punitive sanctions were outlined as “encouragement” for corrective action.

While NCLB has come to dominate the educational scene in all states, it is important to remember that states were never obligated to sign on to the legislation. However, as with all categorical or targeted funding, if they wanted federal dollars, then compliance was required. That is how the federal government has so successfully inserted itself into a state policy domain under the U.S. Constitution, and in many ways, become the dominant partner.

Race to The Top
As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, one of President Obama’s responses to the economic crisis confronting the nation, was funding for his Race to The Top (RTT) education initiative. “The ARRA [laid] the foundation for education reform by supporting investments in innovative strategies that are most likely to lead to improved results for students, long-term gains in school and school system capacity, and increased productivity and effectiveness”. Unlike other federal initiatives for K12, this one was a competitive grant program. Once more, states
have been required to embrace federal objectives in order to receive funds. But rather than receive funding and then comply, applicants had to “submit a plan addressing four education reform goals, including the use of internationally-benchmarked standards and assessments, the recruitment and retention of effective teachers and principals, the adoption of data systems to track student progress, and the improvement of low-performing schools” (NYSED, 2009, p. 81). The U.S. Department of Education would then determine which states would be funded. In this process, the federal government has been able to exert even greater influence than with past initiatives. In the case of Michigan, when its initial proposals were unsuccessful, the state then enacted policies to satisfy perceived federal expectations in anticipation of success in future applications. Under the Obama administration, the federal government has achieved its ultimate policy goal—voluntary state compliance in a state policy domain in accordance with federal requirements.

Closing Remarks
The federal government has clearly demonstrated its willingness, over the decades, to take charge of an important area of policy, one that not only impacts the economic future of the country, but also speaks to the compelling issues of social equity, social cohesion, and the furtherance of democracy in America. Education is that policy area. While constitutionally, K-12 education remains the right of the states, what the last 50 years have shown us is that the federal government is more than willing to insert itself into that domain, especially given the significance of education in modern society. The tension between the federal government and the states resulting from such “intrusion” is to be expected as is the pushback. But what some states will eventually do if left to their own devices, all will do sooner if they sign on to federal funding. The importance for the common good of educating all the nation’s citizenry is not necessarily something best left to the whim of local politicians. The federal government clearly believes it has a role to play.

References


If students from a totalitarian nation were secretly transported to an American classroom to continue their lessons with new teachers and a new curriculum, would they be able to tell the difference? I do not ask this question facetiously. It seems plausible, for example, that a good lesson in multiplication, chemistry, or a foreign language might seem equally at home in many parts of the world. So what would be different about teaching and learning in your local schools than in the schools of a country governed by a one-ruling-party dictatorship? Do students in the United States learn how to participate as democratic citizens in decisions that affect all our lives? Most of us would like to believe that they do. While a school in North Korea or China might be teaching students blind allegiance to their nation’s leaders and deference to the social and political policies those leaders enact, we would expect that schools in the United States would teach students the skills and dispositions needed to evaluate for themselves the benefits and drawbacks of particular policies and government practices.

We would not be surprised to learn, for example, that North Korean children are taught to abide by an “official history” handed down by the single-party authoritarian regime. After all, a school curriculum that teaches one unified, unquestioned version of “truth” is one of the hallmarks of totalitarian societies. Democratic citizens, on the other hand, are committed to the people, principles, and values that underlie democracy—such as political participation, free speech, civil liberties, and social equality. Schools might develop these commitments through lessons in the skills of analysis and exploration, free political expression, and independent thought. And U.S. schools often support democratic dispositions in just such ways.

But teaching and learning do not always conform to democratic goals and ideals. Tensions abound, and in recent years some of the very foundations of democratic engagement such as opportunities for independent thinking and critical analysis have become less and less common. If being a good democratic citizen requires thinking critically about important social assumptions, then that foundation of citizenship is at odds with recent trends in education policy.

I run a research collaborative called Democratic Dialogue. The teachers, students, and university researchers associated with Democratic Dialogue are all interested in the role schooling plays in strengthening democratic societies. We conduct studies to investigate the many different ways schools are fulfilling (or not fulfilling) their historic
democratic mission to foster an educated citizenry, capable of informed engagement in civic and political life. These studies indicate a clear and troubling trend: much of current education reform is limiting the ways teachers can develop the kinds of attitudes, skills, knowledge, and habits necessary for a democratic society to flourish. Indeed, the goals of K-12 education have been shifting steadily away from preparing active and engaged public citizens and towards more narrow goals of career preparation and individual economic gain.

Pressures from parents, school boards, and a broad cultural shift in educational priorities have resulted in schools across the country being seen primarily as conduits for individual success, and, increasingly, lessons aimed at exploring democratic responsibilities have been crowded out.

In many school districts, ever narrower curriculum frameworks emphasize preparing students for standardized assessments in math and literacy at the same time that they shortchange the social studies, history, and citizenship education. Moreover, there is a “democratic divide” in which higher achieving students, generally from wealthier neighborhoods, are receiving a disproportionate share of the kinds of citizenship education that sharpen students’ thinking about issues of public debate and concern.
Curricular approaches that spoon-feed students to succeed on narrow academic tests teach students that broader critical thinking is optional. The pedagogical challenge of how to foster thoughtful consideration and analysis of contemporary problems has all too often been replaced by the single-minded drive to make students better test-takers, rather than better citizens.

**Outlawing Critical Thinking**

The high-stakes testing mandated by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top (RTTT) legislation has further pushed to the margins educational efforts that challenge students to grapple with tough questions about society and the world. In a study by the Center on Education Policy, 71 percent of districts reported cutting back on time for other subjects—social studies in particular—to make more space for reading and math instruction (Rettner, 2006). Similarly, research by the Washington-based group Common Core found that two-thirds of public school teachers surveyed report that disciplines such as science, social studies, and art are crowded out of the school day as a direct result of state testing policies (Common Core, 2012). In testimony before the U.S. Senate, historian David McCullough noted that, because of NCLB, “history is being put on the back burner or taken off the stove altogether in many or most schools,” (Dillion, 2006).

An increasing number of students are getting little to no education about how government works, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the evolution of social movements, and U.S. and world history. As Peter Campbell, Missouri State Coordinator for FairTest, noted,

> The sociopolitical implications of poor black and Hispanic children not learning about the Civil Rights movement, not learning about women’s suffrage, not learning about the U.S. Civil War, and not learning about any historical or contemporary instance of civil disobedience is more than just chilling. It smacks of an Orwellian attempt not merely to re-write history, but to get rid of it. (Campbell, 2006).

The implications Campbell describes are not limited to poor Black and Hispanic students. Any student being denied knowledge about historical events and social movements misses out on important opportunities to link his or her education to the quintessentially democratic struggles for a better society for all.

I focus on history teaching here, but the trend is not limited to social studies. In many states, virtually every subject area is under scrutiny for any deviation from one single narrative, based on knowable, testable, and purportedly uncontested facts. An English teacher, in a study undertaken by my research team, told us that even novel reading was now prescriptive in her state’s rubric: meanings predetermined, vocabulary words preselected, and essay topics predigested. A science teacher put it this way: “The only part of the science curriculum now being critically analyzed is evolution,” (Westheimer, 2008).

As bad as that sounds, omitting lessons that might develop critical thinking skills is still different from outlawing them. But in the book *Pledging Allegiance: The Politics of Patriotism in America’s Schools*, I detailed the ways in which schools, districts, states, and even the federal government—in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks—began to implement policies that actually restrict critical analysis of historical and contemporary events in the school curriculum, (Westheimer, 2007). In the worst-case examples, teachers were suspended or fired for teaching lessons on critical analysis of the news or of textbooks, and students were suspended for expressing dissenting opinions on the war in Iraq, organizing “peace clubs,” or wearing T-shirts with antiwar quotations. Students and a drama teacher in a Connecticut high school spent months researching, writing, and rehearsing a play they wrote about the Iraq war entitled *Voices in Conflict*. The school administration banned the play on the basis that it was “inappropriate.” (In this case, the students went on to perform the play in the spring of 2007 on an off-Broadway stage in New York to impressive critical review.) But efforts to “protect” students from multiple perspectives on historical and contemporary events were not limited to individual cases. State and federal policy followed this trend as well.

In 2003, Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander introduced his bill, The American History and Civics Education Act, by warning that educators should not expose students
to competing ideas in historical texts. Civics, he argued, should be put back in its “rightful place in our schools, so our children can grow up learning what it means to be an American,” (Alexander, 2003). (For Alexander, what it means to be an American is more answer than question, it seems.) In April 2008, the Arizona House of Representatives passed SB 1108 specifying that schools whose teachings “denigrate or encourage dissent” from “American values” would lose state funding. More recently, in 2012, the Texas Republican Party platform briefly included language that asserted opposition to “the teaching of critical thinking skills” or lessons that “have the purpose of challenging the student’s fixed beliefs.”

A more worrisome example, however, comes from Florida. In June 2006, the Florida Education Omnibus Bill included language specifying that “the history of the United States shall be taught as genuine history…. American history shall be viewed as factual, not as constructed, shall be viewed as knowable, teachable, and testable,” (Arizona, 2008). The stated goal of the bill’s designers was “to raise historical literacy” with a particular emphasis on the “teaching of facts.” For example, the bill requires that only facts be taught when it comes to discussing the “period of discovery” and the early colonies. This led Florida State Representative Shelley Vana, who also served as the West Palm Beach teachers union president, to wonder just “whose facts would they be, Christopher Columbus’s or the Indians?’” (Dolinsky, 2006). Florida thus became the first state I know of to ban historical interpretation in public schools, thereby effectively outlawing critical thinking.

Of course, professional historians almost universally regard history as exactly a matter of interpretation; indeed, the competing interpretations are what make history so interesting. Historians and educators alike widely derided the mandated adherence to an official story embodied in the Florida legislation, but the impact of such mandates should not be underestimated. The bill and other similar legislative examples of restricting history lessons to one “true” narrative remain on the books in Florida, Nebraska, Kansas, and other states.

More recently, in the fall of 2014, more than a thousand Jefferson County, Colorado high school students and hundreds of teachers walked out of classes to protest the school board’s efforts to promote “positive” American history and downplay the legacy of civil disobedience and protest. The protests came in the wake of a proposal by the school board to make changes to the Advanced Placement (AP) history curriculum. AP history, the board suggested “should promote citizenship, patriotism, essentials and benefits of the free enterprise system, respect for authority and respect for individual rights. Materials should not encourage or condone civil disorder, social strife or disregard for the law,” (Glenza, 2014). Responding to the school board’s proposal, both teachers and students in Jefferson County boycotted classes, with teachers calling in sick, and students staging a variety of protests outside of schools. One Jefferson County teacher characterized the board’s proposal as “an attack on teachers and public education, and a disregard for the needs of our students…. It’s really, really scary to be a teacher in Jefferson County right now,” (Glenza, 2014) while a high school senior, highlighting the irony of students protesting a curriculum that discourages protesting, vowed: “If they don’t teach us civil disobedience, we will teach ourselves,” (Jacobs, 2014).

There is a certain irony, evident in the above examples, to the argument that schools in a democratic nation can bet-

“...two-thirds of public school teachers surveyed report that disciplines such as science, social studies, and art are crowded out of the school day as a direct result of state testing policies (Common Core, 2012).”
ter prepare students to be democratic citizens by encouraging deference to authority and discouraging lessons about social movements and social change. Reporting on the Colorado protests, *U.S. News and World Report* may have best captured the sentiments of outraged teachers, parents, and students when they wrote that the Jefferson County proposal “isn’t about making better citizens. It’s about removing the very idea behind good citizenship—the very American premise that we choose our leaders, hold them accountable, demonstrate peacefully to make our views known and to question authority,” (Milligan, 2014).

At this point, some readers might be thinking that conditions seem restrictive and antidemocratic for students in the public schools, but that, on the whole, many private schools prepare students for a democratic society by offering a broad liberal education that asks students to grapple with difficult and contested policy issues. Evidence indicates otherwise. As the goals for K 12 public education have shifted away from preparing active and engaged public citizens and toward more narrow goals of career preparation and individual economic gain, private schools have, in many ways, led the pack. Pressures from parents, board members, and a broad cultural shift in educational priorities have resulted in schools across the country being seen primarily as conduits for individual success, and lessons aimed at exploring democratic responsibilities have increasingly been crowded out. A steadily growing body of research in the United States now echoes what Tony Hubbard, former director of the United Kingdom’s Independent Schools Inspectorate, stated most plainly after reviewing data from an extensive study of British independent schools: Because of the immense pressure to achieve high academic results on exams and elevate schools’ prestigious college-entrance rates, independent schools are “overdirected” so that students do not have “sufficient opportunity or incentive to think for themselves.” Increasingly following formulas that “spoon-feed” students to succeed on narrow academic tests, independent schools, Hubbard warned, “teach students not to think.” (BBC, 2002).

Although the overt examples I’ve described above that seek to ban critical thinking from classrooms are worrisome, the more insidious developments come from an education-reform movement that makes those efforts unnecessary. So many schools have now become myopically focused on efficiency and accountability that there are simply fewer and fewer opportunities for deeper consideration of important ideas. The relentless focus on testing and “achievement” means that time for in-depth critical analysis of ideas has been diminished. Social studies scholar Stephen Thornton notes that, by critical thinking, school officials too often mean that students should passively absorb as truth, the thinking already completed by someone else (Thornton, 2005). Current school reform policies and many classroom practices too often reduce teaching and learning to exactly the kind of mindless rule-following that makes students unable to make principled stands that have long been associated with democracy. The hidden curriculum of post-NCLB classrooms became how to please authority and pass the tests, not how to develop convictions and stand up for them.

**What Kind of Citizen?**

All is not bleak when it comes to educating for democratic understanding and participation. Many teachers across the country conduct excellent educational activities concerned with helping students become active and effective citizens (see sidebar).
But even when educators are expressly committed to teaching “good citizenship,” there is cause for caution. My colleague Dr. Joseph Kahne, Mills College, California, and I spent the better part of a decade studying programs that aimed to develop good citizenship skills among youth and young adults. In study after study, we come to similar conclusions: the kinds of goals and practices commonly represented in curricula that hope to foster democratic citizenship usually have more to do with voluntarism, charity, and obedience than with democracy. In other words, “good citizenship” to many educators means listening to authority figures, dressing neatly, being nice to neighbors, and helping out at a soup kitchen—not grappling with the kinds of social policy decisions that every citizen in a democratic society needs to understand.

In our studies of dozens of programs, we identified three visions of “good” citizens that help capture the lay of the land when it comes to citizenship education: the Personally Responsible Citizen; the Participatory Citizen; and the Social Justice Oriented Citizen. These three visions can serve as a helpful guide to the variety of assumptions that fall under the idea of citizenship education. As Table 1 illustrates, they also lead to very different program decisions.

Personally Responsible Citizens contribute to food or clothing drives when asked and volunteer to help those less fortunate whether in a soup kitchen or a senior center. They might contribute time, money, or both to charitable causes. Both those in the character education movement and those who advocate community service would emphasize this vision of good citizenship. They seek to build character and personal responsibility by emphasizing honesty, integrity, self-discipline, and hard work. Or they nurture compassion by engaging students in volunteer community service.

Participatory Citizens participate in the civic affairs and the social life of the community at local, state, and national levels. Educational programs designed to support the development of participatory citizens focus on teaching students about how government and other institutions (e.g., community based organizations, churches) work and about the importance of planning and participating in organized efforts to care for those in need, for example, or in efforts to guide school policies. While the personally responsible citizen would contribute cans of food for the homeless, the participatory citizen might organize the food drive.

Social-Justice Oriented Citizens know how to critically assess multiple perspectives. They can examine social, political, and economic structures and explore strategies for change that address root causes of problems. These are the critical thinkers, and this vision of citizenship is the least commonly pursued in schools. We called this kind of citizen the Social-Justice Oriented Citizen because these programs emphasize the need for citizens to be able to think about issues of fairness, equality of opportunity, and democratic engagement. They share with the participatory citizen an emphasis on collective work related to the life and issues of the community.

However, Social-Justice Oriented Citizens make independent thinking a priority and encourage students to look for ways to improve society, and become thoughtfully informed about a variety of complex social issues. These programs are less likely to emphasize the need for charity and volunteerism as ends in themselves and more likely to teach about ways to effect systemic change. If Participa-
Citizens are organizing the food drive and Personally Responsible Citizens are donating food, the Social Justice Oriented Citizens are asking why people are hungry and acting on what they discover.

Currently, the vast majority of school programs that take the time to teach citizenship emphasize either good character—including the importance of volunteering and helping those in need—or technical knowledge of legislatures and how government works. Far less common are schools that teach students to think about root causes of injustice or challenge existing social, economic, and political norms as a way to strengthen democracy.

Voluntarism and kindness can be used to avoid much thinking about politics and policy altogether. If that’s the case, then in terms of democratic citizenship, these programs are highly limited. Character traits such as honesty, integrity, and responsibility for one’s actions are certainly valuable for becoming good neighbors and citizens. But, on their own, these traits are not about democracy. A growing number of educators and policymakers promote voluntarism and charity as an alternative to social policy and organized government action.

Former U.S. President George Bush Sr. famously promoted community service activities for youth by imagining a “thousand points of light” representing charitable efforts to respond to those in need. But if young people understand these actions as a kind of noblesse oblige—a private act of kindness performed by the privileged and fail to examine the deeper structural causes of social ills, then the thousand points of light risk becoming a thousand points of the status quo. Citizenship in a democratic community requires more than kindness and decency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Personally Responsible Citizen</th>
<th>Participatory Citizen</th>
<th>Social-Justive Oriented Citizen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acts responsibly in their community</td>
<td>Active member of community organizations and/or improvement efforts</td>
<td>Critically assesses social, political, and economic structures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works and pays taxes</td>
<td>Organizes community efforts to care for those in need, promote economic development, or clean up environment</td>
<td>Explores strategies for change that address root causes of problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picks up litter, recycles, and gives blood</td>
<td>Knows how government agencies work</td>
<td>Knows about causes of problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps those in need, lends a hand during times of crisis</td>
<td>Knows strategies for accomplishing collective tasks</td>
<td>Seeks out and addresses areas of injustice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Simple Action | Contributes food to a food drive | Helps to organize a food drive | Explores why people are hungry and acts to solve root causes |

| Core Assumptions | To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must have good character; they must be honest, responsible, and law-abiding members of the community | To solve social problems and improve society, citizens actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and community structures | To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must question and change established systems and structures when they reproduce patterns of injustice over time |

Democratic Educational Goals

Recall my opening question: If students from a totalitarian nation were secretly transported to a U.S. classroom, would they be able to tell the difference? Both classes might engage students in volunteer activities in the community—picking up litter from a nearby park perhaps or helping out at a busy intersection near a school or an old-age center. Government leaders in a totalitarian regime would be as delighted as leaders in a democracy if their young citizens learned the lessons put forward by many of the proponents of personally responsible citizenship: don’t do drugs; show up to work on time; give blood; help others during a flood; recycle; etc. These are desirable traits for people living in any community. But they are not about democratic citizenship. In fact some conceptions of personal responsibility—obedience and loyalty, for example—may work against the kind of independent thinking that effective democracy requires.

For more than two centuries, democracy in the United States has been predicated on citizens’ informed engagement in civic and political life and schools have been seen as essential to support the development of such citizens. “I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves,” Thomas Jefferson famously wrote, adding that if the people are “not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a whole-
some discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.” Belief in the fundamental importance of education for democracy has been long-standing. And yet these beliefs are at risk in schools today. For democracy to remain vibrant, educators must convey to students that both critical thinking and action are important components of democratic civic life—and students must learn that they have important contributions to make. Democracy is not a spectator sport. The exit of the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa, dedicated to a critical history of war, bears the following inscription:

History is yours to make. It is not owned or written by someone else for you to learn….History is not just the story you read. It is the one you write. It is the one you remember or denounce or relate to others. It is not predetermined. Every action, every decision, however small, is relevant to its course. History is filled with horror and replete with hope. You shape the balance.

I suspect many readers could imagine a lesson in democracy by beginning a discussion with just such a quotation.


References


BBC News. (2002). Public schools “spoon-feed” students. Available at news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/1844620.stm


1 That bill died on the senate floor but had it passed, schools would have been required to surrender teaching materials to the state superintendent of public instruction, who then could have withheld state aid.
Evaluating educators has been an integral part of the field for over a century. But increasingly, debate about the rigor of those evaluations, their general value for teachers’ professional development and growth, and their implications for the less instructionally proficient has arisen. This latter issue has gained momentum over the past decade as recommendations for the scope and criteria of those evaluations have evolved. Considerable focus upon evaluations is tied to concerns that there exists a disproportionately high percentage of faculty being awarded tenure and exemplary annual ratings. The worthiness of the entire process as well as some of the recipients has been questioned, especially in districts where student achievement is deemed to be seriously lagging. Consequently, it is being increasingly argued that so-called “high quality” teachers can be determined, in considerable part, by student assessment results, often state standardized test scores. From there, it is a short walk to claims that poor performing students, often in inner-city districts, could approximate their better performing suburban counterparts if only high quality educators were identified or cultivated through rigorous personnel actions. In fact, carried to its illogical conclusion, claims have
even arisen that the achievement gap between middle-class white and poor (and often minority) students could be dramatically reduced were underperforming students simply placed with high quality teachers for several consecutive years (Ravitch cited in Haertel, 2013, p. 6).

**Background**

There has been no shortage of educationally “concerned” groups and organizations weighing in on the issue of educator evaluations. For example, ex-Washington, D.C. superintendent Michelle Rhee’s The New Teacher Project (TNTP), a self-proclaimed “national nonprofit committed to ending the injustice of educational inequality” (TNTP, 2015), found in its own 2009 study that 94 percent of teachers evaluated were placed in the top two assessment categories (i.e., superior and effective/proficient), while less than 1 percent were deemed unsatisfactory. The high assessments were then framed by TNTP as “making it impossible to identify truly exceptional teachers” (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern & Keeling, 2009). Later, the organization also “pointed to Florida and Michigan as states that continued to see unlikely high percentages of top-rated teachers” (Vevea, 2013), a statement that followed on the heels of a New York Times article that announced that “In Michigan, 98 percent of teachers were rated effective or better” (Anderson, 2013). Over the years, various media outlets have chimed in on teacher evaluations including with such inflammatory headlines as “Why We Must Fire Bad Teachers” (Thomas, 2010), often citing so-called “damning” evidence from the school districts of the nation’s major cities as justification of the need for improved evaluations. It is the cumulative effect of these kinds of reports in conjunction with the perceived persistence of
student academic underachievement that have fueled the outcry for more rigorous educator accountability.

Along with the installation of the new Obama administration in 2009 came critics of the original NCLB legislation and its focus upon testing and AYP. An alternative was necessary, and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) marked its beginning. One of the goals of the ARRA was to lay the “foundation for education reform by supporting investments in innovative strategies that are most likely to lead to improved results for students” (USDoE, 2009, p. 2). The Act provided $4.35 billion in funding for the now familiar Race to The Top (RTT) program. Whatever those innovative strategies, their focus had to be related to significant improvement in student achievement, and integral to that was the revamping of the evaluation of educators—“revising teacher evaluation, compensation, and retention policies to encourage and reward effectiveness” (The White House, 2009).

When the RTT program was announced, it was done so with three phases in mind. It was immediately apparent that an emphasis upon instructor and administrator quality was a significant consideration for future funding by this program. Michigan was unsuccessful in its first two bids.

**The Case in Michigan**

Under newly elected Governor Snyder, Michigan passed numerous education bills in 2011 including regulations emphasizing more rigorous teacher evaluations that were to include students’ assessment data worth upwards to 50 percent by 2015-16. Then in September 2011, Governor Snyder appointed the Michigan Council on Educator Effectiveness (MCEE) to develop a new state educator evaluation process. Pressure was immediately put upon the committee to report back within 8 months. It did release an interim report in April 2012, but did not release its final report till July, 2013 (MCEE, 2013). The legislature followed by introducing new bills in January, 2014 but the bills struggled in the legislature throughout 2014 and eventually expired. Their reintroduction is imminent.

**The MCEE Report**

The final recommendations of the MCEE represent the culmination of a significant investigation into and assessment of the evaluation of educators. The most contentious aspect of the recommendations is that part of the student growth component referred to as VAM—value-added model. That is, “statistical models that use data from growth and assessment tools to produce estimates of the ‘value added’ by individual educators to student learning” (MCEE, 2013, p. 20). Or put another way, what is the professional impact or contribution of an individual educator to student learning after statistically controlling for the myriad of other factors that also impact that learning. Important to understand is that use of “the term ‘value-added’ … is intended to have the same meaning as the term ‘causal effect’ ” (Briggs & Domingue cited in Haertel, 2013, p. 11).

In fairness to the committee, they addressed the VAM concept and acknowledged the problems associated with it, but then declared that “when comparing the use of VAM data to the alternative of district-developed data models of teaching effects, the MCEE believes that VAMs provide more reliable evidence” (p. 20). This is no small matter. The MCEE is declaring that locally designed models for determining individual teacher impact upon student learning are left significantly wanting, but VAMs, notwithstanding all of their problems, are better. And, while there is an element of truth to that statement, the MCEE is still making an argument favoring the “lesser of two evils.” Teachers should not take much comfort from that declaration because it remains quite contestable as to whether an individual teacher’s attribution to student learning is, in fact, statistically determinable and consistently so over time in the ways that are being claimed. People’s careers may depend upon this.

The argument being put forth by the MCEE is that the myriad of complex social variables that impact student learning are not only identifiable, but adequately so, and are then capable of being statistically teased out in some uniform and reliable fashion so that only a teacher’s instructional impact is left, like tea leaves at the bottom of a strainer. That the nation’s major statistical association does not concur (ASA, 2014) and that longitudinal studies demonstrate historical problems with the reliability of VAMs should concern all educators. Finally, one can only
imagine that given the statistical sophistication necessary to calculate and then interpret such an individualized data portrayal, very few, if any, educators will have the foggiest idea as to the data’s computational process, let alone its accuracy, even if published. How does one confront potential errors from a position of ignorance?

VAMs remain controversial and unreliable as a statistical model because of their attempt to claim student progress in achievement is directly related to a teacher’s unique instructional performance or quality, often referred to as “teacher effects” in the literature, but this confuses correlation with causation (ASA, 2014). And however problematic some of the issues associated with the VAM model may appear to Michigan teachers, perhaps of greater concern should be the MCEE report’s argument in favor of using student scores in subject matter not taught by the particular teacher.

“State-provided VAM or growth data in core content areas may be used in a teacher’s evaluation using information from that teacher’s students, even if the teacher does not teach in one of the core content areas. This means that teachers may be evaluated, in part, for the learning of their own students, even in subject areas that they do not directly teach” (MCEE, 2013, p. 2).

Some Problems With VAMs

There is a lack of clarity about the totality of the effect by teachers upon student achievement. There has been considerable research over the past decade or more that identifies teachers as the greatest “within school” factor for improving student learning. But that implies much more than reality reveals. The question that seems to have been overlooked by too many legislators, policy makers and reform critics is “how large is that potential factor?” And therein lays the crux of the issue. Haertel (2013) suggests that the research generally indicates that the variance in student test score gains attributable to teachers averages approximately 10 percent. Additionally, other research by Nye, Hedges and Konstantopoulus (2004) has pointed out that the methodological design for many of these kinds of studies raised a major problem.

“The advantage of this design is that it does not require the researcher to identify in advance, and measure adequately, the aspects of teacher behavior or other teacher characteristics that are related to achievement. Of course, this design cannot identify the specific characteristics that are responsible for teacher effectiveness” (p. 239).

Consequently, we are left with some models which claim that Teacher A is reportedly more effective than Teacher B, but is then unable to explain just how and why. Presumably, that is where the observation component of the MCEE evaluation model comes into play. Whether the observation will, in fact, identify those characteristics with adequate specificity and link them with an increase in student learning remains to be seen. This writer is doubtful.

Conveniently Overlooked

Lost in this discussion, and conveniently so because of the social and policy implications for legislators, is the elephant in the room—those “outside of school” factors which dwarf the variance in attribution of student learning attributed to the teacher. Those outside factors range...
anywhere from 50 to 60 percent (Goldhaber, Brewer, & Anderson cited in Haertel, 2013; Hattie, 2003). And these are factors that education policy cannot really address. Nevertheless, they are not irrelevant. Furthermore, as Haertel (2013) points out, “in the real world of schooling, students are sorted by background and achievement through patterns of residential segregation, and they may also be grouped or tracked within schools” (p. 12). Ignoring this fact has greater consequences for teachers of low-performing students because while “VAM scores do predict important student learning outcomes, [evidence suggests that] these scores nonetheless measure not only how well teachers teach, but also whom and where they teach” (emphasis added, p. 17). One understands that statistically controlling for things like socioeconomic status (SES) are commonplace in social research studies, but one also wonders if VAM models can adequately account for things such as “school climate and resources, teacher peer support, and, of course, the additional instructional support and encouragement students receive both out of school and from other school staff [which] all make the test of teaching much easier for teachers in some schools and harder in others” (Haertel, 2013, p. 11).

Concluding Remarks

I am not opposed to Michigan’s K-12 students having the best possible educators in their classrooms. I am only taking issue with the VAM aspect of the student growth component of the Michigan educator evaluation, and specifically, the idea that student scores on standardized tests speak in some direct way to a given teacher’s performance quality. There is no reliable evidence for this claim. “Teachers whose students show the biggest gains one year are often not the same as those whose students show big gains the next year” (Haertel, 2013, p. 6). Such unreliability over time can produce seemingly illogical scenarios where a veteran teacher in good standing, whose students’ test scores outperform the state means and who is well regarded by the district superintendent is declared effective one year and ineffective the next based on a state-developed VAM (Strauss, 2014). That the teacher in question has sued the state education board with affidavit support from the superintendent should surprise no one. Whether similar scenarios and legal responses are what await Michigan is anyone’s guess. Perhaps, the MCEE pilot study conducted with different vendors and their value-added models might provide some insight.

“[E]ven when different VAM scores are … highly correlated across models …, some teachers’ VAM scores will change from statistical model to statistical model …. [T]eachers with scores near the established cut points will be especially vulnerable to ratings changes that result from small changes in VAM scores produced by different statistical models” (MCEE pilot, 2013, p. 32).

Clearly, this component of the proposed teacher evaluation model is fraught with problems. That a coalition of groups including Michigan’s largest teacher union and all the state’s administrator organizations came out in support in a December, 2014 editorial is disconcerting (Arellano, Cook, Hayes, Mayes, Melton, Miller & Zdeb-Roper, 2014). One cannot help but wonder if they fully appreciated the intricacies and implications of the VAM.
Education critics, numerous legislators and some members of the public may simply see the model as the means for identifying and easily dismissing “poorly” performing K-12 faculty. But to assume that this form of faculty turnover alone will contribute to significantly improved academic achievement, particularly for our less advantaged student population, is utter folly. Much more is required and more beyond the confines of the school building. Perhaps the most important aspect of this entire discussion relates to any thinking associated with using this model to somehow have all minority students in proximity to the state’s top performing teachers or even have a teaching force comprised entirely of the same. “There is no way to assign all of the top performing teachers to work with minority students or to replace the current teaching force with all top performers. The thought experiment cannot be translated into an actual policy” (Haertel, 2013, p. 7). Given the work that Michigan has put into teacher evaluations, given the political climate in the state, given the public mood and the relative strength of the MEA and AFT, and given the K-12 funding requirements of the federal government, it would seem that the enactment of the MCEE’s recommendations are a matter of “when” not “if.”

NOTE TO READERS: The Haertel (2013) article offers a very good layperson’s explanation of VAMs while Rowan, Schilling, Spain, Bhandari, Berger & Graves (2013) is the description and results of the MCEE teacher evaluation pilot study that educators should become familiar with. It, too, is quite readable.

References


It’s a typical weekday in mid-winter for Michigan students. In one classroom, boys and girls from all backgrounds sit at tables clustered together with five of their peers. As their teacher asks them questions, a majority of the students dutifully raise their hands, impatient to show that they know the answer. But what a bystander, someone who has not worked with students before, may not catch is that there are a handful of students who do not raise their hands and participate. Maybe they fidget with a toy they brought from home. Maybe they stare blankly into the white space of the board behind their teacher because they cannot force their brains to pay attention. Maybe they listen intently but cannot comprehend exactly what their teacher is saying.

In another classroom, students play contently with one another, sharing trucks and puzzles and great stories of airplanes soaring in the sky or submarines sinking along the deep. Every student gets along. They fit in with their peers. And when it comes time to learn, every student feels comfortable to attempt situations that may be uncomfortable because of the room’s environment. Both are classrooms within the same building, with students of the same age and backgrounds. So what makes these two classrooms so different?

Both rooms include students that are part of Special Education. Students in both rooms are being subjected to the Least Restrictive Environment Clause of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that was first passed in 1975. But why is there such a noticeable difference between the classrooms? The clause, applying to all public schools, states that “to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are to be educated with children who are not disabled” (“IDEA,” 2015). So that begs the question—does the mandate from the federal government align with what research tells us? Is mainstreaming students with disabilities effective (like in the second classroom), or does the decreased one on one time with teachers actually harm their education, much like the first classroom?

**Support for Inclusion**

For years, educators and legislators have been discussing the impact of the Least Restrictive Environment, or LRE, on students with disabilities. Kathleen Whitbread, Associate Professor of Education at the University of Saint Joseph, supports inclusion. According to Dr. Whitbread, “Although separate classes, with lower student to teacher ratios, controlled environments, and specially trained staff would seem to offer benefits to a child with a disability, research fails to demonstrate the effectiveness of such programs...There is mounting evidence that, other than a smaller class size, there is little that is special about the special education system.” Whitbread also indicates that the negative effects of separating children with disabilities from their peers far outweigh any benefit to smaller classes. (Whitbread, 2005)

First, It seems to be that the environment of a general education classroom helps all students stay engaged, regardless of ability. It is clear to us now that no two students learn alike. Because of these differences, a variety of different teaching practices such as auditory, visual and physical to name a few, keep students better engaged and interested in the material. Mainstreaming students in special education allows them to be subjected to different facets of learning that can stimulate not only their thinking, but their attention span as well.
The History of Inclusion

A survey conducted in 1994 by the American Federation of Teachers polled teachers and parents of students with disabilities and asked their thoughts about inclusion. This was a time when the stride for full inclusion was just gaining momentum. Some parents of students with more severe disabilities stated they were “concerned about the opportunities their children will have to develop basic life skills in a regular classroom setting. They [were] also cautious about inclusion because of fears that their children [would] be ridiculed by other students” (SEDL, 1995).

However, evidence now shows that inclusive education for students with disabilities actually creates a unified and welcoming environment for all students involved. An environment fostered in acceptance, created with support from a teacher, helps these students feel comfortable in putting forth effort and attempting assigned tasks to the best of their ability. This also helps general education students learn the importance of tolerance and helping behavior within themselves. Additionally, inclusion supports the development of peer relationships between students in a class. In Anne Hocut’s, a research professor at the University of Miami, study in 1996, many educators were concerned with the social lives of students with learning disabilities and suggested their constant removal from the classroom to receive services contributed to their lack of membership in the classroom’s social community (Hocut, 1996).

Criticisms of Inclusion

So, it seems Whitbread has a point. There is a substantial amount of evidence that supports inclusion for a number of disabilities for a variety of reasons. In general, students with disabilities in mainstreamed classrooms show improved test performance, grades, behavior, motivation, peer relationships and goal-reaching abilities. But does a student with a Learning Disability (LD) react to inclusion the same way a student with ADHD does? What about a student with an Emotional Impairment? Evidence suggests not exactly.

Anne Hocut believes that placement is not the key factor educators should be focused on. She believes that classroom environment and the quality of instruction have “more impact than placement on the success of students with disabilities (Hocut, 1996), as does the individual student. For example, a study done with students with a learning disability showed that inclusion was not beneficial. The study researched 11 poor-reading students longitudinally in both general and special education classrooms. Researchers Marston, Fuchs and Fernstrom found that these students “gained nearly twice as many new reading words per week in special education as they had in general education”, and that “students with learning disabilities who had been in special education classes and returned to general education made small but steady gains while in special education, but made no gains in general education” (Rands, St. Jules, Bartlett, Litt, Lee & Wentz, 2007).

Hocut’s research does show, however, the positive impact of inclusion on the education of students with disabilities if the general education and special education teachers work together in the best interest of the student. In her study she says: “Students with disabilities in cooperative schools had significantly higher achievement with regard to reading vocabulary and reading comprehension” (Hocut 1996). So in general, when there is an open and communicative environment between the individuals involved in
the child’s life, the educational system of inclusion is most effective.

Inclusion’s Effect on Educators
Some critics of inclusion note that the theory doesn’t address the impact of inclusion on educators. In 2007, research conducted by Rands, Jules and Bartlett, found that general education teachers believed that they had the appropriate training and background to teach students with disabilities but they strongly opposed the notion that all students in special education can thrive and successfully adapt to the general education environment.

Additionally, Jennifer Cassady, a researcher at Xavier University in Cincinnati, OH, conducted another study in 2011. Her results showed that though most general education teachers were willing to accommodate students with disabilities, their confidence and willingness fluctuated as the severity of the student’s disability increased. This suggests there is a flaw in the educational system of teachers, as they don’t feel as prepared when their students’ disabilities are severe.

Conclusions
In general, inclusion has received a lot of widespread support since the 1990s. However, the biggest criticism of inclusion has been its lack of individuation across different types of students. To assert that all students with different disabilities learn the same way has been the biggest pitfall of practical inclusion. The more time a student in special education spends in a general education classroom, the less one on one time they have with a teacher that can address their specific needs. However, evidence supports inclusion as far as its positive impacts on the social and emotional development of students.

Is inclusion the end-all solution to educating exceptional children? Not even close. Other factors such as parental support, teacher involvement, school resources as well as the temperament of the child all play a part. However, one thing we do know is that students in inclusive education can develop better social skills and emotional intelligence in inclusive classrooms.

References


During the 50th Anniversary year of the Grand Valley State University College of Education, the Partnership delegation Committee of the University’s Barbara H. Padnos International Center selected two College of Education faculty members—the largest contingent from any single College—to participate in the 2014 GVSU International Partnership delegation to our partner institution in Mexico, the prestigious Universidad de las Américas Puebla (UDLAP) located in the historic Mexican city of Cholula. The two participants—Dr. Deepak Prem Subramony (Associate Professor—Educational Technology in the Department of Special Education, Foundations and Technology) and Dr. Jay Cooper (Associate Professor—College Student Affairs Leadership in the Department of Leadership and Learning) represented the College of Education in this delegation, which visited the UDLAP campus and the cities of Cholula, Puebla, and Mexico City from March 2nd through 8th, 2014. Dr. Subramony’s participation was funded via a GVSU International Partnership delegation Grant, while Dr. Cooper obtained his funding via a GVSU International Partnership Sustenance Grant.

The delegation—ably and expertly co-led by Dr. Michael Vrooman (Associate Professor—Spanish in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures) and Ms. Rebecca Hambleton (the Padnos International Center’s Director of Study Abroad and International Partnerships)—also included the following participants from outside the College of Education: Ms. Cheryl Jones (Office...
Coordinator—Human Resources), Dr. Ashley Rosener (Liaison Librarian—Professional Programs at the Steelcase Library), Ms. Brianne Perez (Academic Advisor—College of Health Professions), and Dr. Peter Zhang (Associate Professor—Communication Studies in the School of Communications). The Padnos International Center provided the bulk of the financial support involved in the delegates’ participation in this visit, including mandatory pre-departure information and orientation sessions, international flights to and from Mexico, most in-country travel expenses, housing accommodations, several meals, and international travel insurance, adding up to an expense of approximately US $2,800 per person. Delegates were expected to be full participants in the delegation and travel with the group, all the while doing their best to represent the University and their respective units in a positive and professional manner.

**Day 1:**
Sunday, March 2nd dawned a typical cold, cloudy, late-winter day in West Michigan as the delegation departed from Grand Rapids, arriving on schedule in warm, sunny Mexico City in the afternoon. After clearing Mexican immigration and customs, the group boarded a modern, comfortable ‘Estrella Roja’ bus that whisked passengers directly from Terminal 2 of Mexico City’s Benito Juárez International Airport to the long-distance bus terminal in Puebla—a scenic, two-and-a-half hour journey traversing a high mountain pass with spectacular views of the twin volcanoes of Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl. Upon arriving in Puebla, the group was warmly received and welcomed by Ms. Giovannina Howden (Head of Student Mobility at UDLAP’s Directorate General for Research, Graduate Studies and Internationalization), who accompanied the delegates to their hotel in Cholula, where the smoking Popocatepetl volcano was framed by a spectacular orange-red sunset as check-in formalities were completed. The delegates spent the evening taking a walk into Cholula’s historic central plaza and enjoying an authentic Mexican dinner featuring exotic delicacies such as *huîlacoche* (black corn truffles) and fresh, handmade corn tortillas.

**Day 2:**
The work week started Monday, March 3rd with a visit to the beautifully constructed and landscaped campus of UDLAP. The visit began with a formal breakfast meeting and
“Several commonalities between the UDLAP campus and GVSU’s Allendale campus were immediately apparent, including the generous sense of space fostered by the un-crowded arrangement of buildings interspersed with airy, open lawns and plazas,... and the happy, smiling faces of students, staff and faculty.”
photo session with UDLAP’s senior administration, held at the 18th-century Hacienda de Santa Catarina Mártir—the most historic, legendary and emblematic building on campus that currently serves as UDLAP’s Rectory. Following this meeting, Ms. Howden and other staff members from UDLAP’s international office spent a tremendous amount of time, energy and enthusiasm giving the visiting delegates a grand tour of the sprawling, art-filled UDLAP campus. Several commonalities between the UDLAP campus and GVSU’s Allendale campus were immediately apparent, including the generous sense of space fostered by the un-crowded arrangement of buildings interspersed with airy, open lawns and plazas, the impressive edifices constructed with an excellent sense of design and high-end materials, the abundance of trees, flowers and expertly-managed natural areas, the extraordinary amount and quality of artworks large and small, and the happy, smiling faces of students, staff and faculty.

Apart from its “sight-seeing” value, the tour also served the purpose of orienting the delegates to the layout of the UDLAP campus and the locations of the various academic departments and administrative units, so that delegates could make their way to their professional meetings across campus the following day. The tour ended at UDLAP’s main student dining facility, where delegates had the opportunity to rub shoulders with UDLAP students and get a taste of UDLAP campus life. It became abundantly clear to the delegates after dining at this facility a couple times that UDLAP adheres to extremely high standards of quality and performance when it comes to feeding its students. Every item of food offered to students was prepared healthfully, with organic or natural ingredients and a minimum of salt, sugar and grease. delegates marveled at how every bite was full of flavor and freshness. Following lunch, the delegates were treated to an extremely interesting and enlightening presentation and Q&A session on Mexican history, culture and society—with special focus on Puebla state, were UDLAP and the city of Cholula are located—by UDLAP cultural anthropology faculty Dr. Alison Elizabeth Lee.

Day 3:
Tuesday, March 4th was the day when individual delegates got the valuable opportunity to meet with their respective counterparts across various departments and units at UDLAP. Dr. Subramony and Dr. Cooper enjoyed a very rewarding and productive meeting with faculty members from UDLAP’s Department of Education, including Educational Technology faculty Dr. Laura Helena Porras Hernández and Dr. Bertha Salinas Amescua. The UDLAP faculty members provided the visitors with a highly informative overview of their fascinating, path-breaking undergraduate degree program in Educational Innovation. As Dr. Subramony marveled, “If I had the opportunity to design, develop and implement my dream undergraduate program, it would most likely look exactly like this one!” The two sets of colleagues also shared copies of their recent scholarly publications with each other, discussed current trends in the field, and made plans for future collaboration in the areas of teaching and research.

Following the meeting with Department of Education faculty, Dr. Subramony proceeded to the office housing UDLAP’s highly respected Programa de Liderazgo para Jóvenes Indígenas (Indigenous Youth Leadership Program, website: http://www.udlap.mx/liderazgo/Default.aspx) to meet with its Coordinator of Planning and Logistics Mr. Jesús Roberto Vega Macip, who enthusiastically presented him with the details regarding the program. Unfortunately due to the tight scheduling of his visit Dr. Subramony was unable to meet in person with the Program’s Academic Coordinator Dr. Laura Elena Romero López, however the two faculty successfully connected via e-mail following Dr. Subramony’s return to Michigan. Since then Dr. Subramony presented a guest lecture on...
the ‘Socio-Cultural Impact of Educational Technology on Minority and Indigenous Learners’ at the 2014 Program, and the two faculty members are currently working on a collaborative scholarly presentation and publication project.

Day 4:
Wednesday, March 5th was devoted to exploring the unparalleled cultural and historic sites spread across the Cholula-Puebla area. The bright, sunny, perfect 75-degree day began with a visit to the stupendous Great Pyramid of Cholula, the largest known pyramid on planet earth. The delegates had the opportunity to walk through a network of archeological tunnels burrowing under the pyramid, followed by a hike to its summit to visit the beautiful pink church—La Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de los Remedios—built atop it by Spanish conquistadors, as well as to enjoy the panoramic views of historic downtown Cholula, the smoke-belching Popocatepetl volcano, and the surrounding countryside. Following this, the group headed out to visit the jewel-like churches of San Francisco Acatepec and Santa María Tonantzintla—both textbook examples of the Indigenous Baroque style—before ending up in the UNESCO World Heritage-listed colonial center of Puebla. The delegates enjoyed a delicious sampling of traditional Puebla “mole” sauces at the award-winning ‘El Mural de los Poblanos’ restaurant, followed by a walking tour of the historic district to view architectural gems such as the jaw-dropping Capilla del Rosario—one of the finest examples of New World Baroque anywhere—as well as dozens of palaces, stately homes and churches all beautifully adorned with colorful, locally-crafted Talavera tile-work.

Day 5:
On Thursday, March 6th, the delegates reluctantly bid goodbye to Cholula and the UDLAP campus—and all the new friends they had made there—and were escorted in a comfortable UDLAP van by an impeccably charming and hospitable graduate assistant to Mexico City, the nation’s exhilarating capital and second-largest city in the world after Greater Tokyo, Japan. Upon arriving in the megalopolis the group headed straight to the Castillo de Chapultepec—former residence of Mexican royalty and Presidents—to view its celebrated murals and history-filled rooms, and to take in the commanding vista over the city from its hilltop perch. After touring the castle the delegates
headed to lunch at the famous 'El Cardenal' restaurant, known for its authentic and faithful renditions of classic Mexican dishes. Following lunch, the group completed check-in formalities at their hotel and spent the rest of the afternoon and evening enjoying an exhaustive walking tour of Mexico City's UNESCO World Heritage-listed historic center, home to architectural masterpieces such as the Zócalo plaza (one of the largest city squares in the world), the cavernous Catedral Metropolitana de la Asunción de María with its Churrigueresque (Spanish Baroque) facades, the majestic Palacio Nacional (office of the President), the ruins of the Aztec Templo Mayor, the Palacio de Bellas Artes (displaying a superb blend of Art Nouveau and Art Deco styles), the Neo-Renaissance Palacio Postal, and the photogenic Casa de los Azulejos.

**Day 6:**

On Friday, March 7th the delegates started their last full day in Mexico with a very important appointment—a meeting with the staff members at the Benjamin Franklin Library, established in 1942 to promote friendship and understanding between Mexico and the United States. Discussions at the meeting touched upon a wide range of topics, including Fulbright grant opportunities for US and Mexican faculty, staff and students. Ms. Howden arrived from UDLAP to participate in these discussions as well. The meeting was followed by lunch at a restaurant specializing in authentic cuisine from the Mexican state of Oaxaca, after which Ms. Howden accompanied the delegates to the world-renowned Museo Nacional de Antropología—Mexico’s most visited museum and home to monumental pre-Columbian masterpieces including the celebrated Aztec Sun Stone. At the conclusion of the museum visit the delegates bid a tearful goodbye to Ms. Howden—who had won the entire group’s hearts with her extraordinary professionalism, hospitality and personal warmth—and headed back to the hotel. Later that afternoon and evening, the delegates continued with exploring the virtually unlimited sights offered by this encyclopedia of a city, where even a whole month is not enough to explore its countless museums and monuments. Some were even able to summon up the energy to enjoy an electrifying late evening of authentic Mariachi music at the festive Plaza Garibaldi.

**Day 7:**

On Saturday, March 8th, the delegates got up bright and early in order to head back to the airport to catch their return flight to Grand Rapids. UDLAP once again provided the group with a van and driver who delivered them efficiently and painlessly to Benito Juárez International Airport’s Terminal 2. The group caught one last, breathtaking glimpse of the rising sun painting the skies orange and red behind the photogenic silhouettes of the Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl volcanoes as our Boeing 737-800 aircraft took off and pointed its nose northwards.

In subsequent conversations with each other, the participants of this International Partnership delegation visit to UDLAP and Mexico have repeatedly emphasized how personally enriching and life-changing this experience has been. They have succeeded in making professional and personal contacts with counterparts at UDLAP—and with each other—that have the potential to last a lifetime. This author would like to offer his kudos to Dr. Mark Schaub and Ms. Rebecca Hambleton of GVSU’s Padnos International Center for conceptualizing and running this extremely important and valuable program; he would also like to recognize Ms. Hambleton and Dr. Michael Vrooman for coordinating and leading the trip so flawlessly, from pre-departure orientations to post-trip follow-ups; and finally, he would like to acknowledge every single participant in this delegation for being such wonderful travel companions, colleagues, and friends. Thank you all, so very much!
The Wildly Exciting Education Conference
Celebrating Outstanding Education
The First 50 Years (1964-2014):
Moving Toward a Wildly Exciting Future

By Sally Hipp and Jacque Melin, GVSU Faculty
Photography By Bernadine Carey

The Wildly Exciting Education Conference, held at Eberhard Center on August 11, 12, and 13, 2014, served as the event to open the 50th anniversary year-long celebration for Grand Valley State University’s College of Education. This conference is a biannual conference designed to inspire excellence in education by bringing renowned presenters to West Michigan educators. This year’s presenters were Dr. Robert Marzano, Kevin Honeycutt, Sylvia Rosenthal Tolisano, and Mike Fisher who focused on making education more relevant to 21st century learners. Over 400 teachers and administrators attended the conference.

As part of the 50th anniversary celebration, the College of Education (COE) honored excellence among GVSU COE alumni who have become teachers and principals by presenting them with the Laker Blue Apple Award. Superintendents and principals from public, charter, and parochial schools throughout the West Michigan area were contacted and asked to nominate teachers and/or principals who exemplified excellence in their schools. Nominees were reviewed by GVSU COE professors and selected by the 50th anniversary committee to receive the award.
The following teachers and principals were the first to receive the Laker Blue Apple Award:

- Jenny (Yonkman) Bangma, teacher at Creative Technologies Academy
- J. Peter DeWitt, teacher at Catholic Central High School
- Eric Fey, teacher at West Michigan Aviation Academy
- Jason Grubaugh, teacher at Plainwell High School
- Tom Hosford, principal of Rockford Freshman Center
- Audra Kowalski, teacher at Bryon Center Charter School
- Tricia McPherson, dean of students at Forest Hills Eastern Middle School
- Jaymie Perry, teacher at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic School
- Sara Sposaro, teacher at Zinser Elementary
- Christopher Stabile, teacher at East Grand Rapids High School
- Mark VanderKlok, teacher at Alpine Elementary
- Colleen Waite, teacher at Ottawa Hills High School

We hope to continue this tradition of honoring excellence among GVSU COE graduates as an important way to recognize the wonderful work teachers and administrators are doing each day as they serve 21st century learners.

**College of Education Mission:** We develop quality educators to teach, lead, and serve in local and world communities.
History of Groundswell

Groundswell, formed in 2009 out of Grand Valley State University’s College of Education, was established with the vision to provide schools with the fiscal assistance to implement environmental service learning for students that coincide with grade level curriculum. The organization provides K-12 teachers with support for place-based education and academic service learning in the field of environmental education. In the past, schools affiliated with Groundswell have completed projects such as raising salmon to release into the wild (East Kentwood High School), building trails in the woods as well as studying the effects of hydroponic farming on common garden vegetables (All Saint’s Academy).

The MDEQ Grant/LGREI

Recently, Groundswell was awarded a three-year grant through the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). The MDEQ grant, otherwise known as the Lower Grand River Education Initiative (LGREI), has increased the ability of Groundswell to support local teachers by providing additional financial resources, technical expertise and more opportunities to engage with partners within the community. Because of the grant, Groundswell will interact with 15 schools, 60 teachers, and 1,200 students within Kent County.

The LGREI program focuses on water quality in the Lower Grand River Watershed with an emphasis on nonpoint source pollution. Nonpoint source pollution (NPS) occurs when rainfall and snowmelt flowing across the ground pick up chemicals and other contaminants and ultimately carry them to the river. The LGREI grant is designed to increase education as well as awareness about NPS and efforts that can curb it. The schools that are involved with LGREI will receive Groundswell support that will allow teachers to participate in professional development activities, students to be educated about the issue of water quality, community members to be aware about nonpoint source pollution, community partners to be engaged with experts in the field, and will also allow schools implement service learning initiatives that reduce nonpoint source pollution impacts.

Benefits of LGREI include:

- Financial support up to $1,500 for implementing a project that addresses NPS pollution
- Opportunities to strengthen community engagement
- Student exposure to practitioners in science/environmental fields
- Training for students in video/radio production through a partnership with WGVU
- Opportunities to learn more robust monitoring and data analysis applications with support from the Annis Water Resources Institute

By Paige Leland, GVSU Student
Illustration By BreeAnn Czuprinski, GVSU Alumni
Because Groundswell is working with 15 schools as a part of this grant, students throughout the Grand Rapids area are engaging in a variety of diverse environmental projects. Students in Rockford, MI are painting storm pipes to raise awareness about the runoff. Other students at Union High School are building rain gardens in an effort to utilize the stormwater and reduce runoff. Groundswell also partners with WGVU, a radio station affiliated with Grand Valley State University, and they will be broadcasting with students involved in LGREI projects.
Twenty Fourteen marked the 50th year of the Federal TRiO Programs. It was through the passing of its three flagship programs—TRiO Upward Bound (1964), TRiO Educational Talent Search (1965), and TRiO Student Support Services (1968)—that TRiO became a national institution whose mission remains to “provide equal educational opportunities for all U.S. citizens by increasing college readiness and developing higher education aspirations among students from low-income, first-generation college, and ethnic/racial minority backgrounds” (Pitre, & Pitres, 2009, p. 96-97).

TRiO, within the past 50 years, has seen a major transformation since President Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (that which stands as the conception of the programs). For starters, TRiO has grown from a three-program institution to an eight-program institution. Indeed, TRiO has continued to grow based on America’s social needs; whereas its roots derive from two pre-college programs and one college program, TRiO has responded to specific needs dependent upon social necessity. This has included a program for veterans, a program for post baccalaureate students, and an Upward Bound Math-Science program.

These next 50 years, however, will be the most important years throughout the history of TRiO. On the very year that TRiO celebrates its 50th anniversary, minorities are expected to “outnumber [W]hites among the nation’s public school students for the first time” (Krogstad, & Fry, 2014). Compound Krogstad and Fry’s statistics with The United States Census Bureau’s (2012) most recent report that, by 2060, The United States will reach a minority majority. Yet amidst these data that could regulate the future of access for the United States, TRiO programs still struggle with the binaries that have been created by their politicization. Indeed, the above statistics support that TRiO’s second half-century will be just as important (if not, more important) than their first. More than anything, however, it is imperative that TRiO works harder to improve its best practices despite the political binaries that shape its effectiveness in the United States.

Limited by Binaries

TRiO programs, being government-funded programs, have historically been the topic of political contention. As a result, TRiO programs have been limited by the binary of their effectiveness: either they are effective (Walsh, 2011), or ineffective (Haskins, & Rouse, 2013)—there is no spectrum of in-between. Nonetheless, TRiO programs have proven resilient for their ability to redefine access for underrepresented racial minorities (URMs).

Walsh’s (2011) study contended that TRiO Talent Search and TRiO Upward Bound “can benefit African American and Hispanic students immensely when properly iple-
mented” (p. 19). The TRiO pre-college programs have worked tirelessly to improve access for low socioeconomic status (low-SES) students as well as under represented minorities (URMs). There is an important caveat to Walsh’s quote, however: that African American and Hispanic students are benefited only when TRiO Programs are properly implemented. Unfortunately, the binary of effectiveness can, at times, limit the proper implementation of a TRiO program. Those interested in the program’s continuation are afraid to point out its flaws in fear of losing funding. On the other hand, those interested in
halting TRiO’s funding are afraid to admit that TRiO is even the least bit successful.

A hopeful attitude will see that Walsh’s (2011) article positions itself between the two binaries—although it still leans toward effectiveness. It attempts to take a third-party view of TRiO, and critique it at face value. Although TRiO needs more studies like Walsh’s, it also needs more studies like Haskins and Rouse’s (2013). TRiO must know where it is failing in order for it to attempt to get better. Inasmuch, TRiO needs a clearer understanding of best practices in order to meet the shifting demographic that is expected to arrive by 2060.

**Conclusion**

It has become increasingly apparent that the landscape of education is changing at an intensely rapid pace. There is the growing population of underrepresented minorities as well as President Obama’s potential measure to make the first two years of higher education free for all United States Citizens. For the past 50 years, TRiO has been working to change this climate, but it also becomes imperative that TRiO changes with the climate. As new needs in education develop, new goals develop as well. TRiO’s evolution will fit those goals if, and only if, an honest dialectic is formed around its effectiveness, and how that very effectiveness can improve.

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